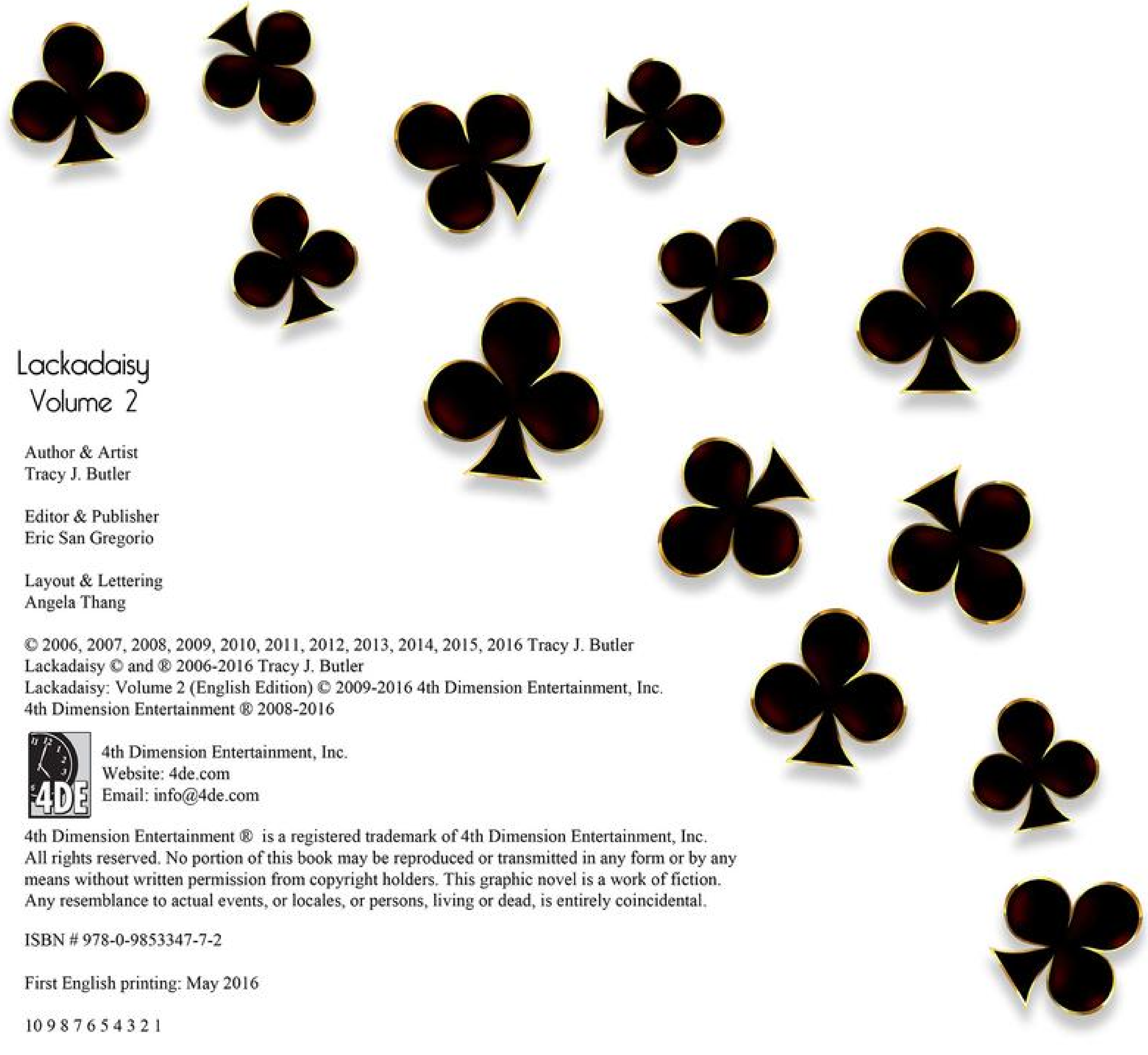
LACKADAISY

VOLUME 2

TRACY J. BUTLER



Lackadaisy
Volume 2

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Lackadaisy: Volume 2 (English Edition) © 2009-2016 4th Dimension Entertainment, Inc.
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ISBN # 978-0-9853347-7-2

First English printing: May 2016

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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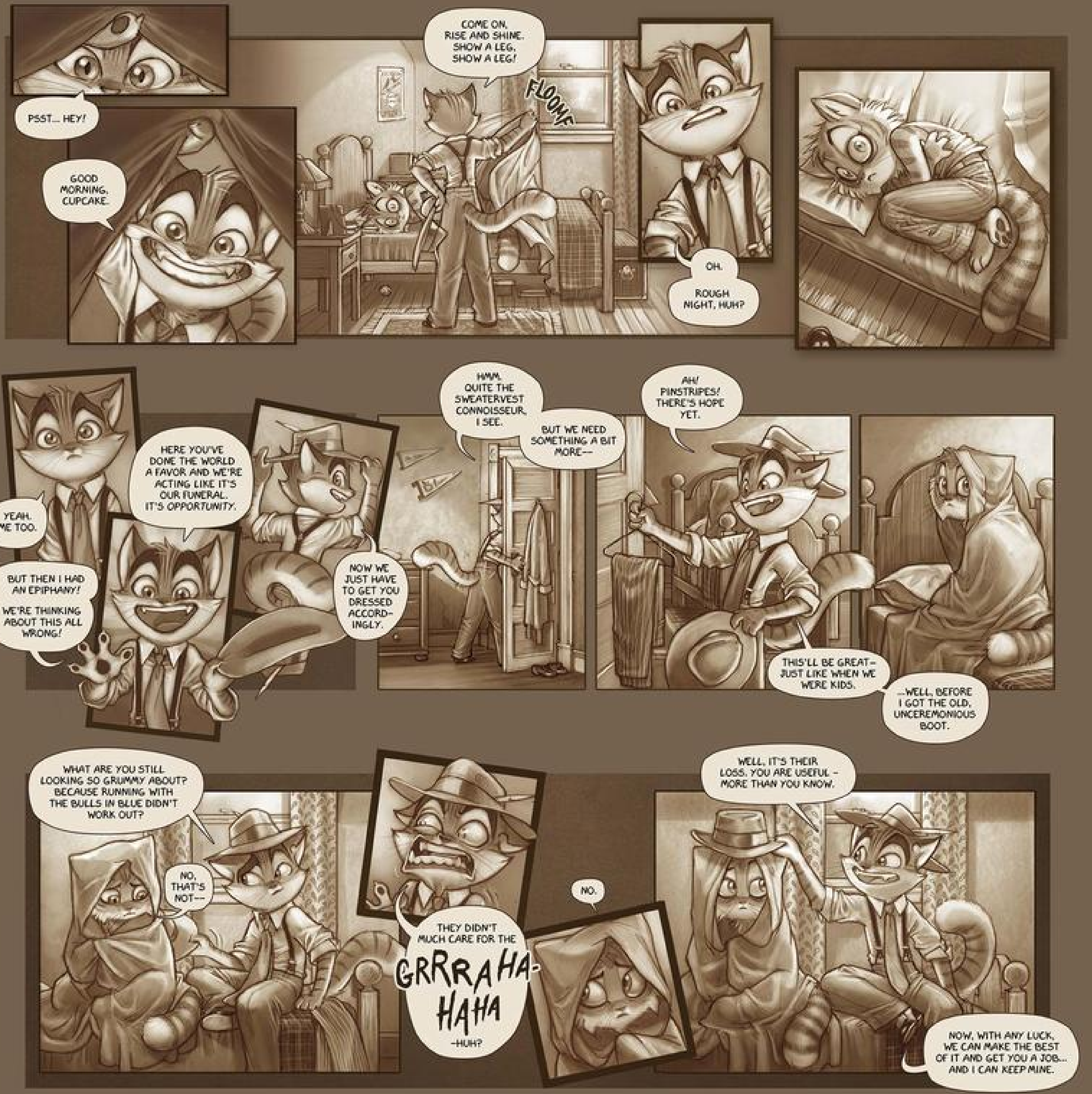
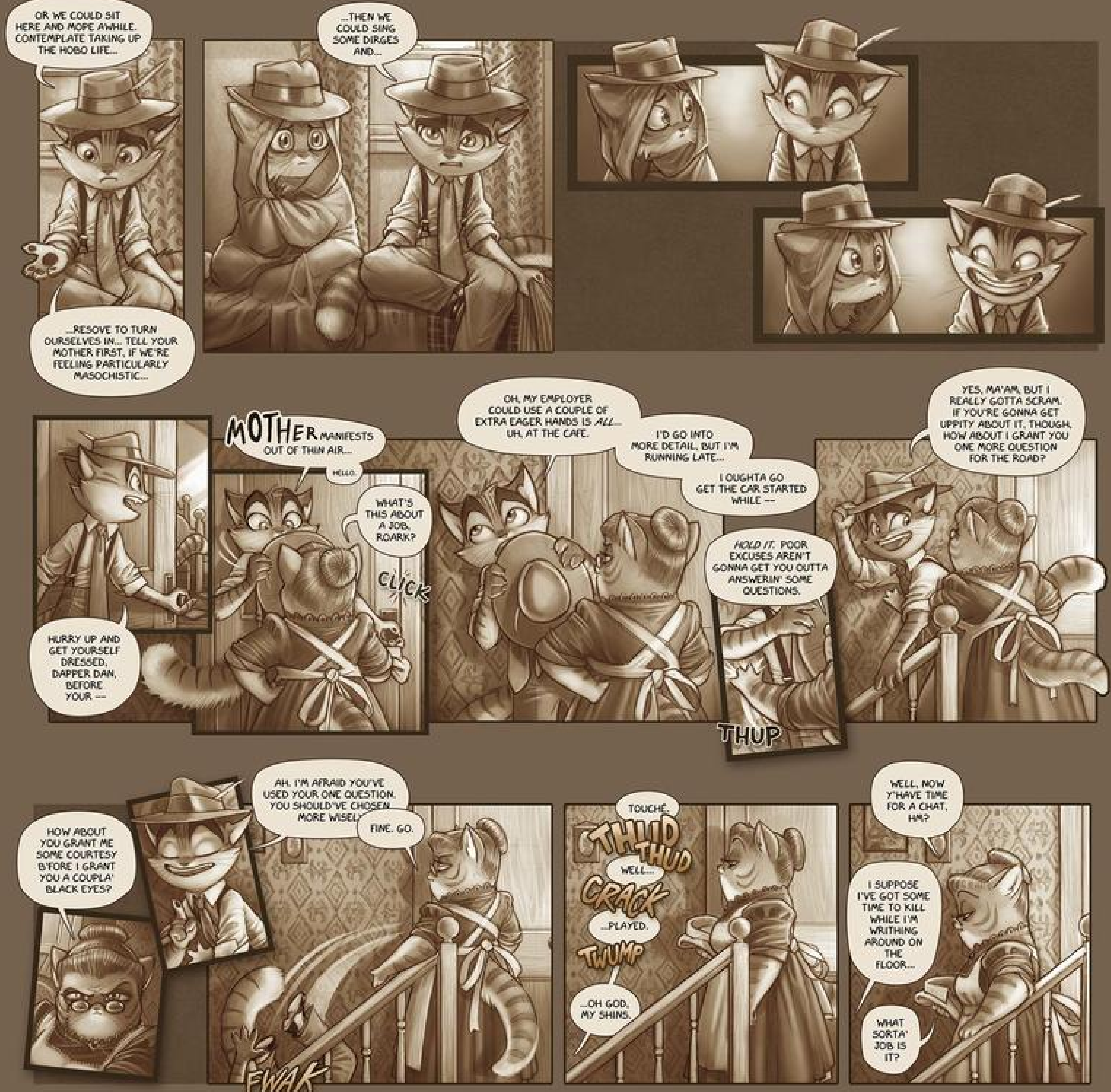
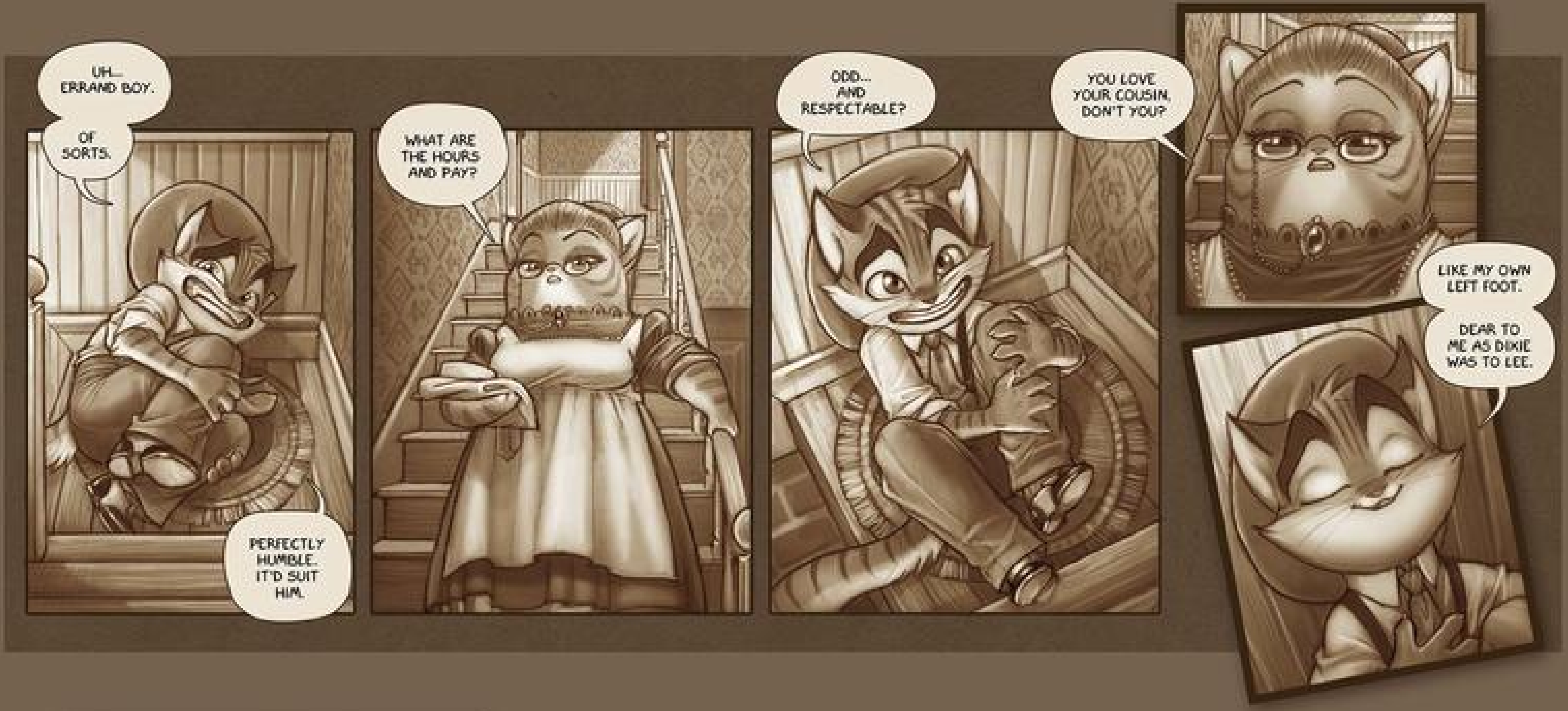
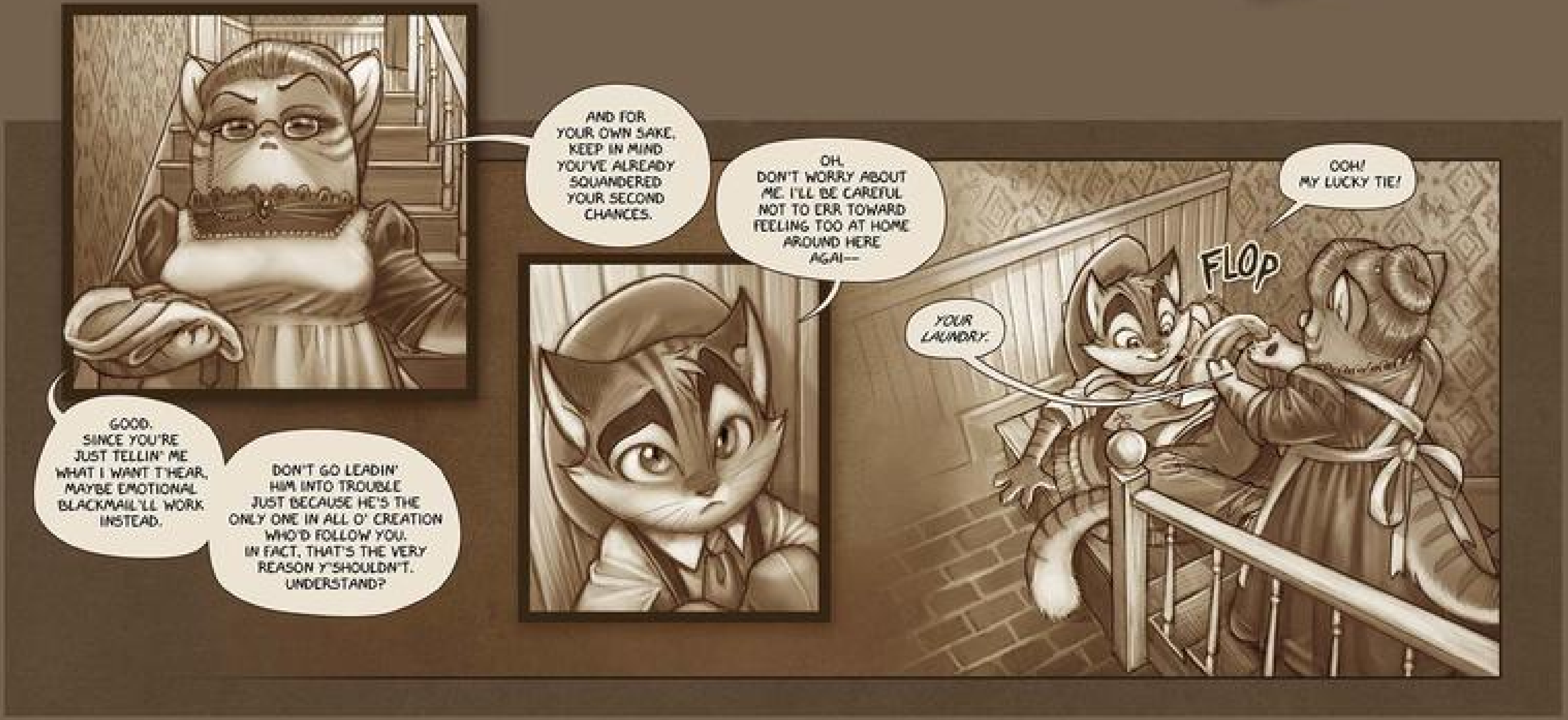
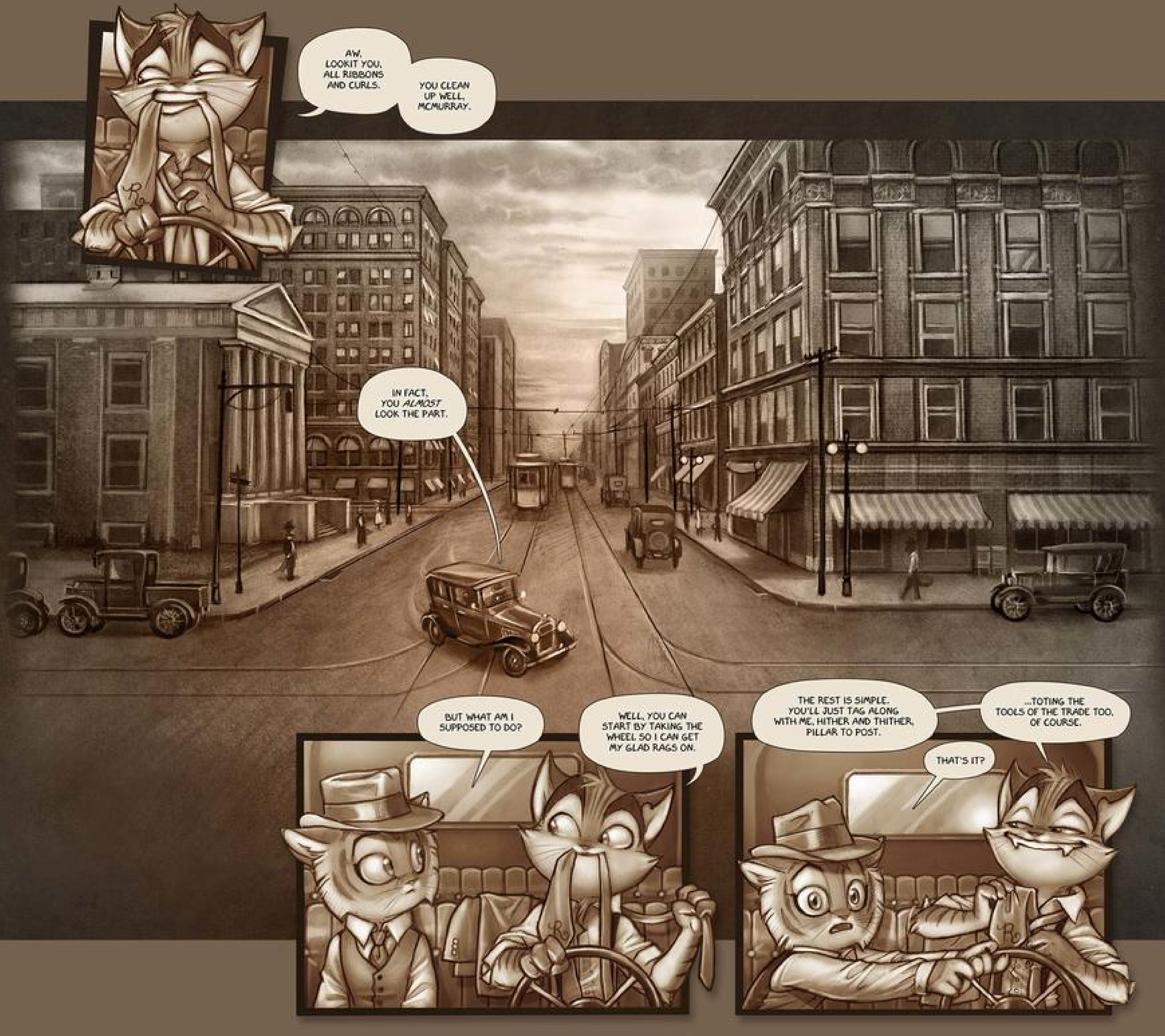
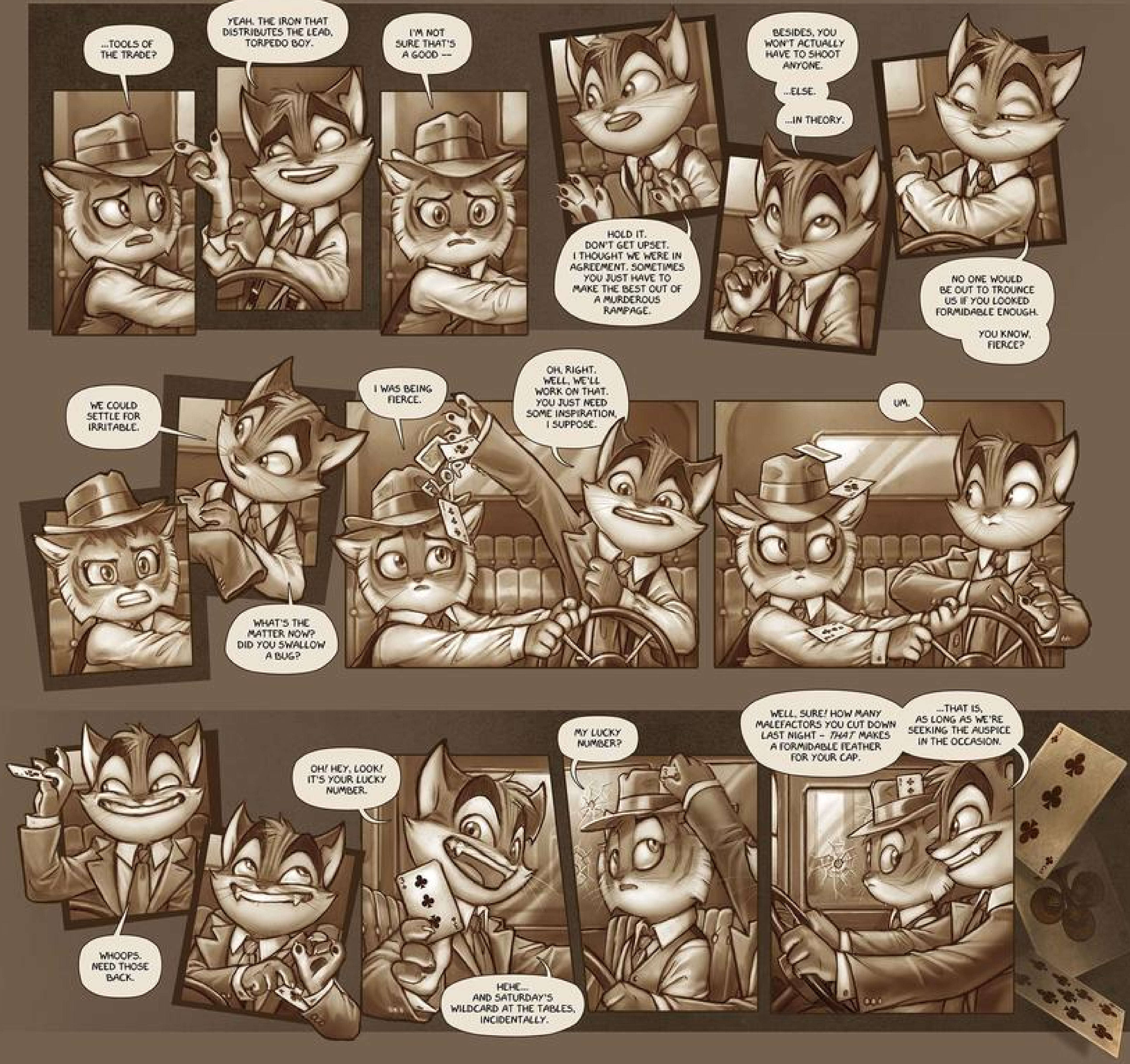

PSST... HEY!
GOOD MORNING, CUPCAKE.
COME ON, RISE AND SHINE. SHOW A LEG, SHOW A LEG!
FLOOMF
OH.
ROUGH NIGHT, HUH?
YEAH. ME TOO.
BUT THEN I HAD AN EPIPHANY!
WE'RE THINKING ABOUT THIS ALL WRONG!
HERE YOU'VE DONE THE WORLD A FAVOR AND WE'RE ACTING LIKE IT'S OUR FUNERAL. IT'S OPPORTUNITY.
NOW WE JUST HAVE TO GET YOU DRESSED ACCORDINGLY.
HMM. QUITE THE SWEATERVEST CONNOISSEUR, I SEE.
BUT WE NEED SOMETHING A BIT MORE--
AH! PINSTRIPES! THERE'S HOPE YET.
THIS'LL BE GREAT-- JUST LIKE WHEN WE WERE KIDS.
...WELL, BEFORE I GOT THE OLD, UNCEREMONIOUS BOOT.
WHAT ARE YOU STILL LOOKING SO GRUMMY ABOUT? BECAUSE RUNNING WITH THE BULLS IN BLUE DIDN'T WORK OUT?
NO, THAT'S NOT--
THEY DIDN'T MUCH CARE FOR THE GRRRAHA-HAHA -HUH?
NO.
WELL, IT'S THEIR LOSS. YOU ARE USEFUL - MORE THAN YOU KNOW.
NOW, WITH ANY LUCK, WE CAN MAKE THE BEST OF IT AND GET YOU A JOB... AND I CAN KEEP MINE.

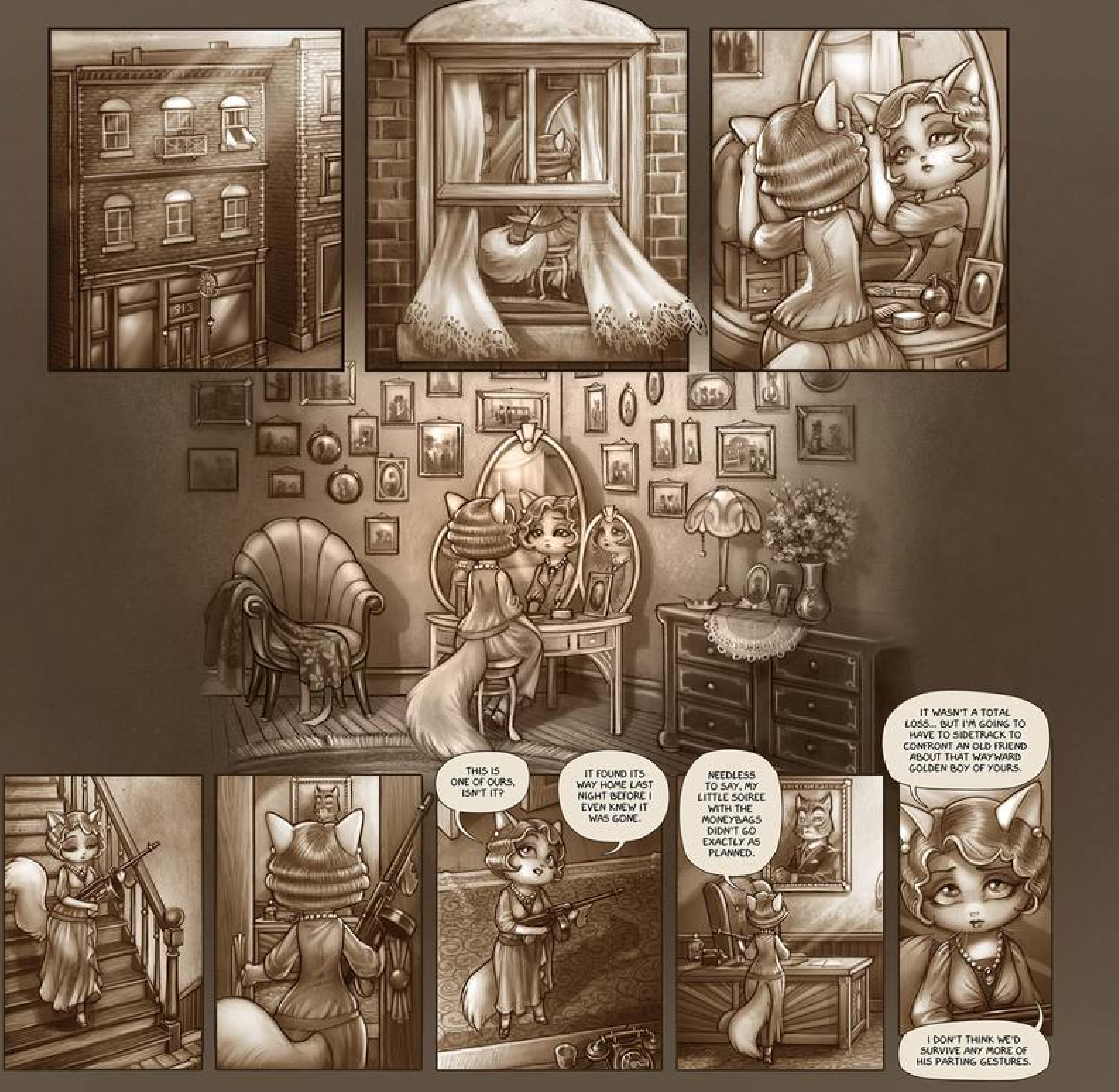

OR WE COULD SIT HERE AND MOPE AWHILE. CONTEMPLATE TAKING UP THE HOBO LIFE...
...RESOVE TO TURN OURSELVES IN... TELL YOUR MOTHER FIRST, IF WE'RE FEELING PARTICULARLY MASOCHISTIC...
...THEN WE COULD SING SOME DIRGES AND...
HURRY UP AND GET YOURSELF DRESSED, DAPPER DAN, BEFORE YOUR --
MOTHER MANIFESTS OUT OF THIN AIR...
HELLO.
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT A JOB, ROARK?
CLICK
OH, MY EMPLOYER COULD USE A COUPLE OF EXTRA EAGER HANDS IS *ALL*... UH, AT THE CAFE.
I'D GO INTO MORE DETAIL, BUT I'M RUNNING LATE...
I OUGHTA GO GET THE CAR STARTED WHILE --
HOLD IT. POOR EXCUSES AREN'T GONNA GET YOU OUTTA ANSWERIN' SOME QUESTIONS.
THUP
YES, MA'AM, BUT I REALLY GOTTA SCRAM. IF YOU'RE GONNA GET UPPITY ABOUT IT, THOUGH, HOW ABOUT I GRANT YOU ONE MORE QUESTION FOR THE ROAD?
HOW ABOUT YOU GRANT ME SOME COURTESY B'FORE I GRANT YOU A COUPLA' BLACK EYES?
AH. I'M AFRAID YOU'VE USED YOUR ONE QUESTION. YOU SHOULD'VE CHOSEN MORE WISELY
FINE. GO.
FWAK
TOUCHÉ.
THUD THUD
WELL...
CRACK
...PLAYED.
TWUMP
...OH GOD, MY SHINS.
WELL, NOW Y'HAVE TIME FOR A CHAT, HM?
I SUPPOSE I'VE GOT SOME TIME TO KILL WHILE I'M WRITHING AROUND ON THE FLOOR...
WHAT SORTA' JOB IS IT?


UH... ERRAND BOY.
OF SORTS.
PERFECTLY HUMBLE. IT'D SUIT HIM.
WHAT ARE THE HOURS AND PAY?
ODD... AND RESPECTABLE?
YOU LOVE YOUR COUSIN, DON'T YOU?
LIKE MY OWN LEFT FOOT.
DEAR TO ME AS DIXIE WAS TO LEE.


GOOD. SINCE YOU'RE JUST TELLIN' ME WHAT I WANT T'HEAR, MAYBE EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL'LL WORK INSTEAD.
DON'T GO LEADIN' HIM INTO TROUBLE JUST BECAUSE HE'S THE ONLY ONE IN ALL O' CREATION WHO'D FOLLOW YOU. IN FACT, THAT'S THE VERY REASON Y'SHOULDN'T. UNDERSTAND?
AND FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, KEEP IN MIND YOU'VE ALREADY SQUANDERED YOUR SECOND CHANCES.
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'LL BE CAREFUL NOT TO ERR TOWARD FEELING TOO AT HOME AROUND HERE AGAI—
YOUR LAUNDRY.
FLOP
OOH! MY LUCKY TIE!


AW, LOOKIT YOU, ALL RIBBONS AND CURLS.
YOU CLEAN UP WELL, MCMURRAY.
IN FACT, YOU *ALMOST* LOOK THE PART.
BUT WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
WELL, YOU CAN START BY TAKING THE WHEEL SO I CAN GET MY GLAD RAGS ON.
THE REST IS SIMPLE. YOU'LL JUST TAG ALONG WITH ME, HITHER AND THITHER, PILLAR TO POST.
...TOTING THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE TOO, OF COURSE.
THAT'S IT?


...TOOLS OF THE TRADE?
YEAH, THE IRON THAT DISTRIBUTES THE LEAD, TORPEDO BOY.
I'M NOT SURE THAT'S A GOOD ---
HOLD IT. DON'T GET UPSET. I THOUGHT WE WERE IN AGREEMENT. SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO MAKE THE BEST OUT OF A MURDEROUS RAMPAGE.
BESIDES, YOU WON'T ACTUALLY HAVE TO SHOOT ANYONE.
...ELSE.
...IN THEORY.
NO ONE WOULD BE OUT TO TROUNCE US IF YOU LOOKED FORMIDABLE ENOUGH.
YOU KNOW, FIERCE?
WE COULD SETTLE FOR IRRITABLE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW? DID YOU SWALLOW A BUG?
I WAS BEING FIERCE.
OH, RIGHT. WELL, WE'LL WORK ON THAT. YOU JUST NEED SOME INSPIRATION, I SUPPOSE.
UM.
WHOOPS. NEED THOSE BACK.
OH! HEY, LOOK! IT'S YOUR LUCKY NUMBER.
HEHE... AND SATURDAY'S WILDCARD AT THE TABLES, INCIDENTALLY.
MY LUCKY NUMBER?
WELL, SURE! HOW MANY MALEFACTORS YOU CUT DOWN LAST NIGHT – *THAT* MAKES A FORMIDABLE FEATHER FOR YOUR CAP.
...THAT IS, AS LONG AS WE'RE SEEKING THE AUSPICE IN THE OCCASION.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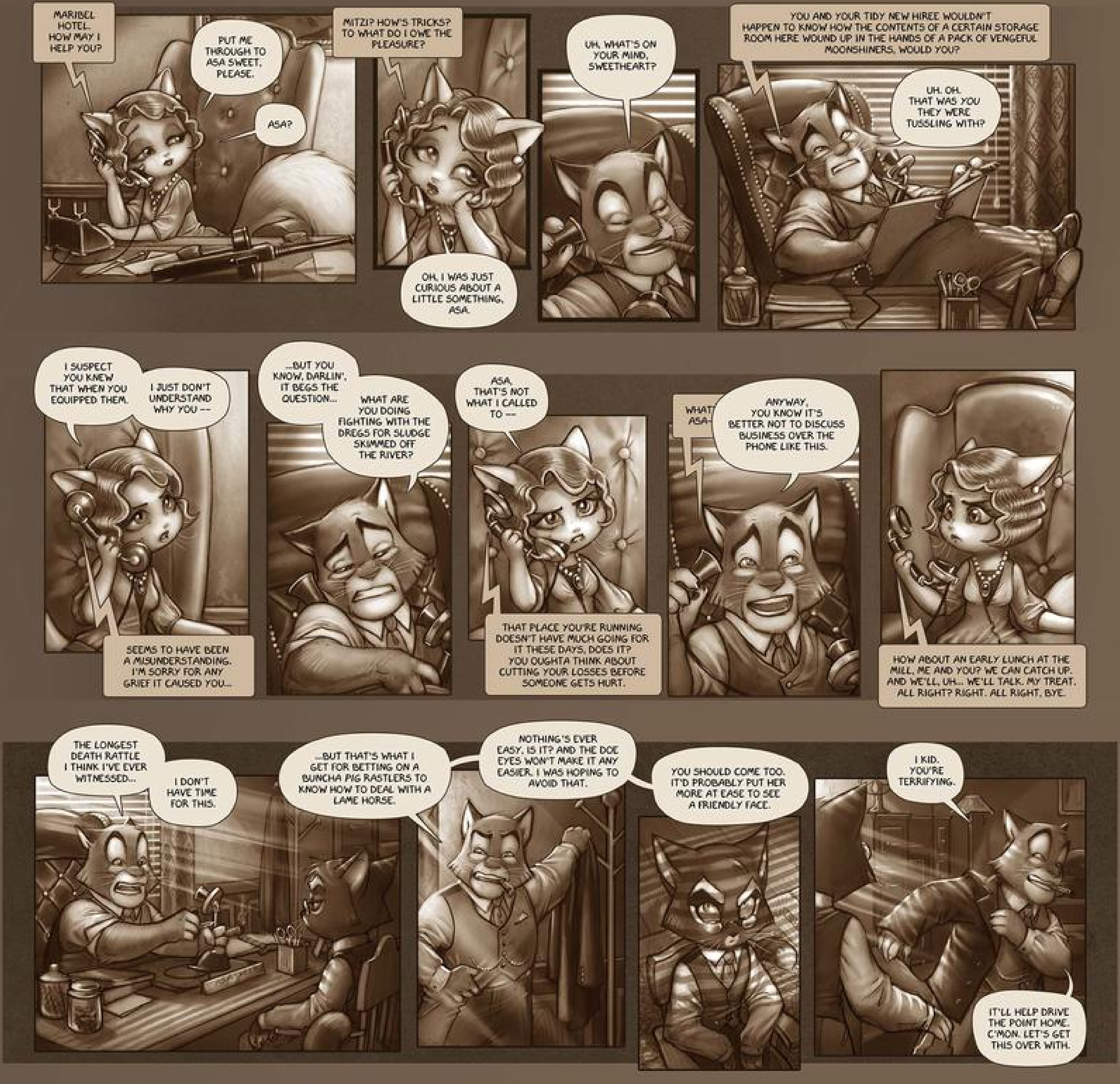
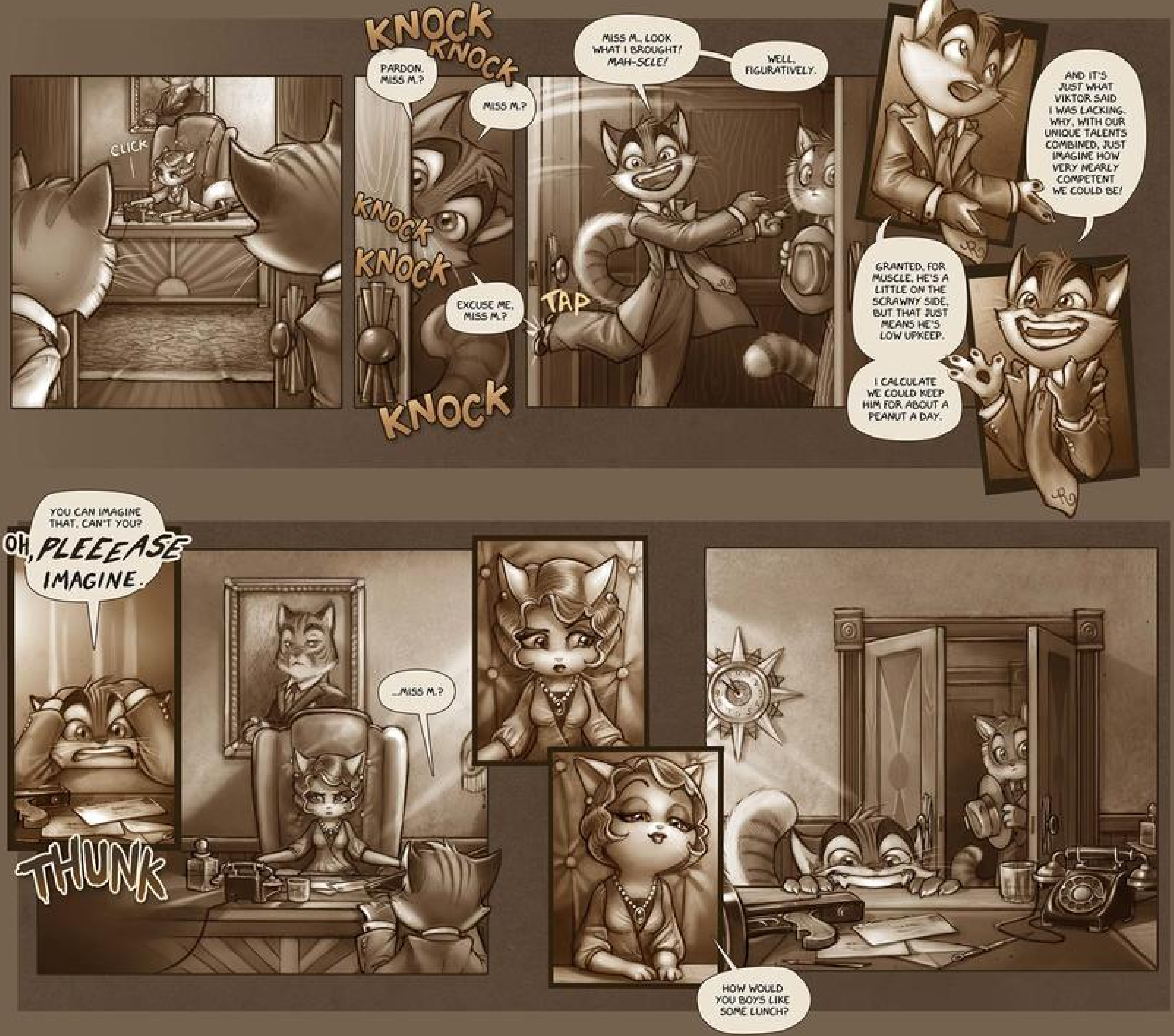
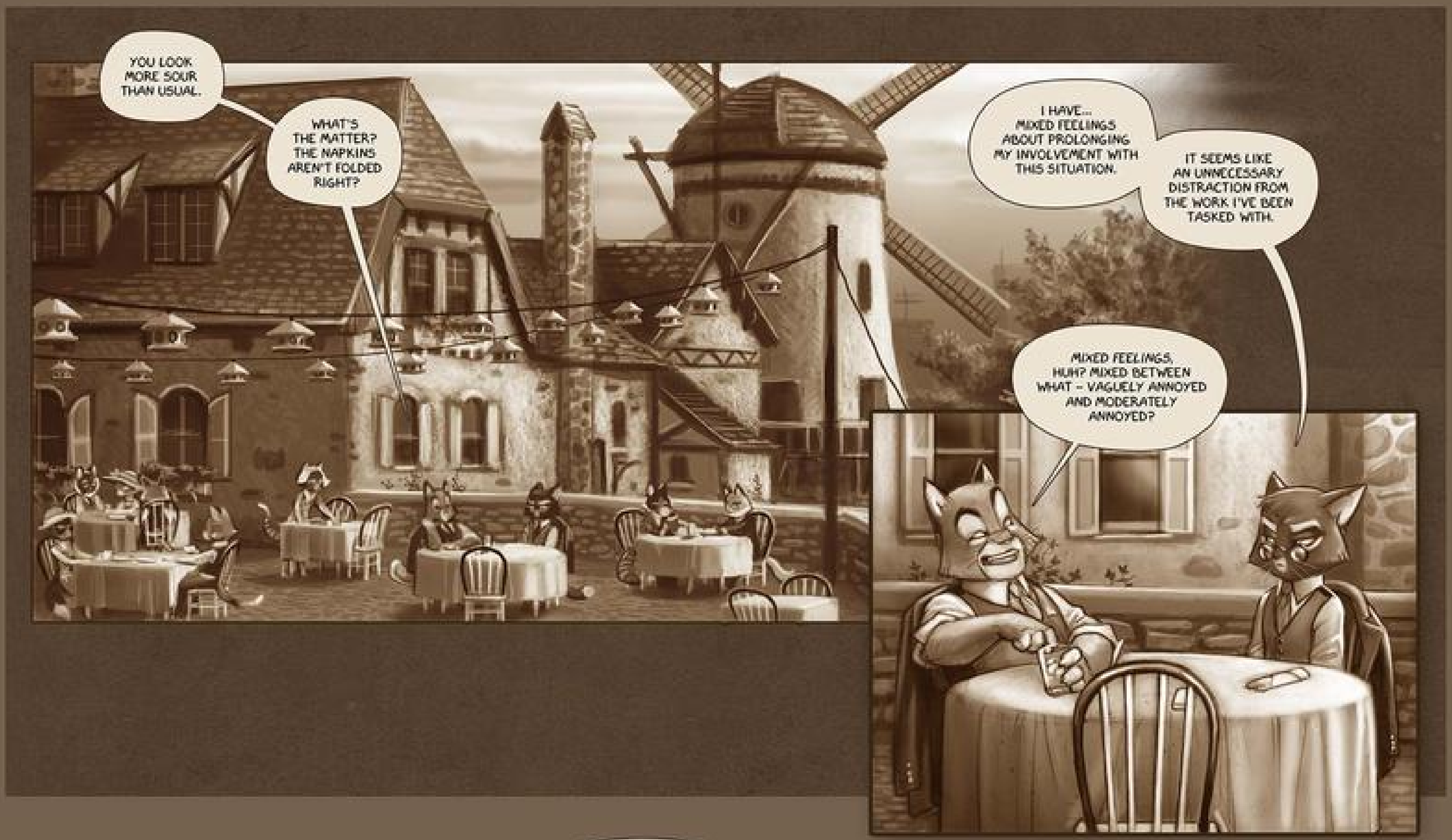
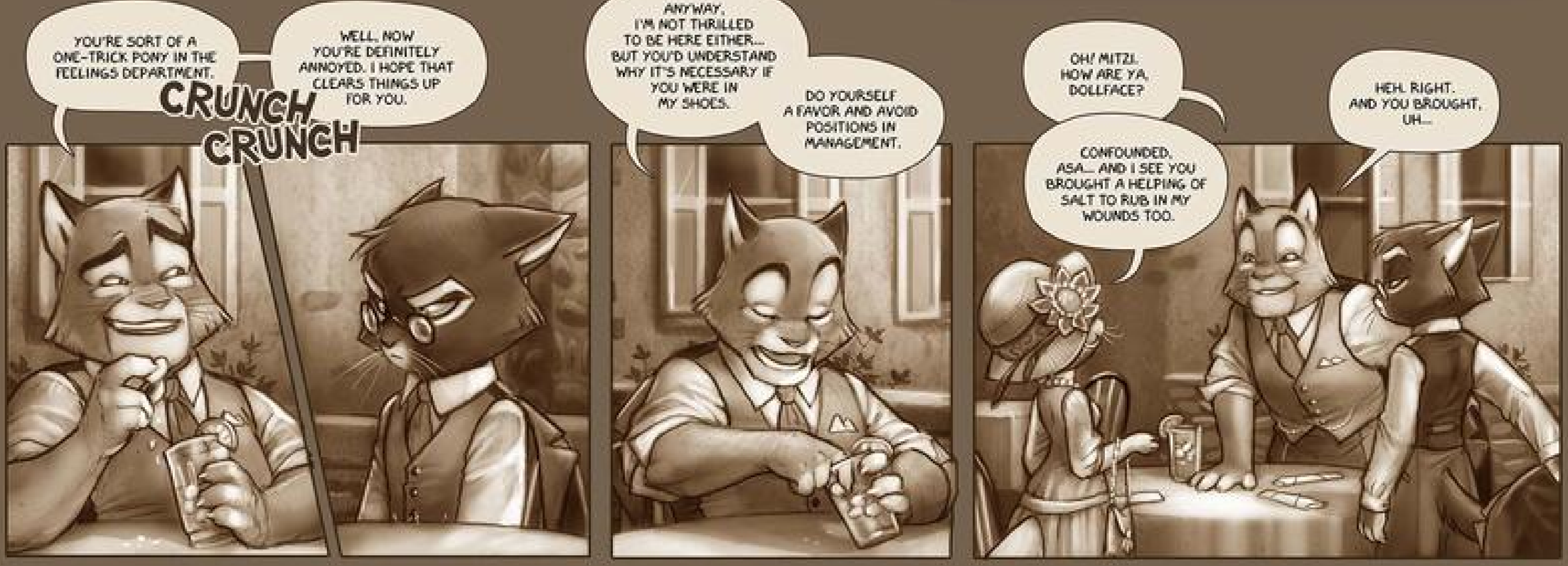
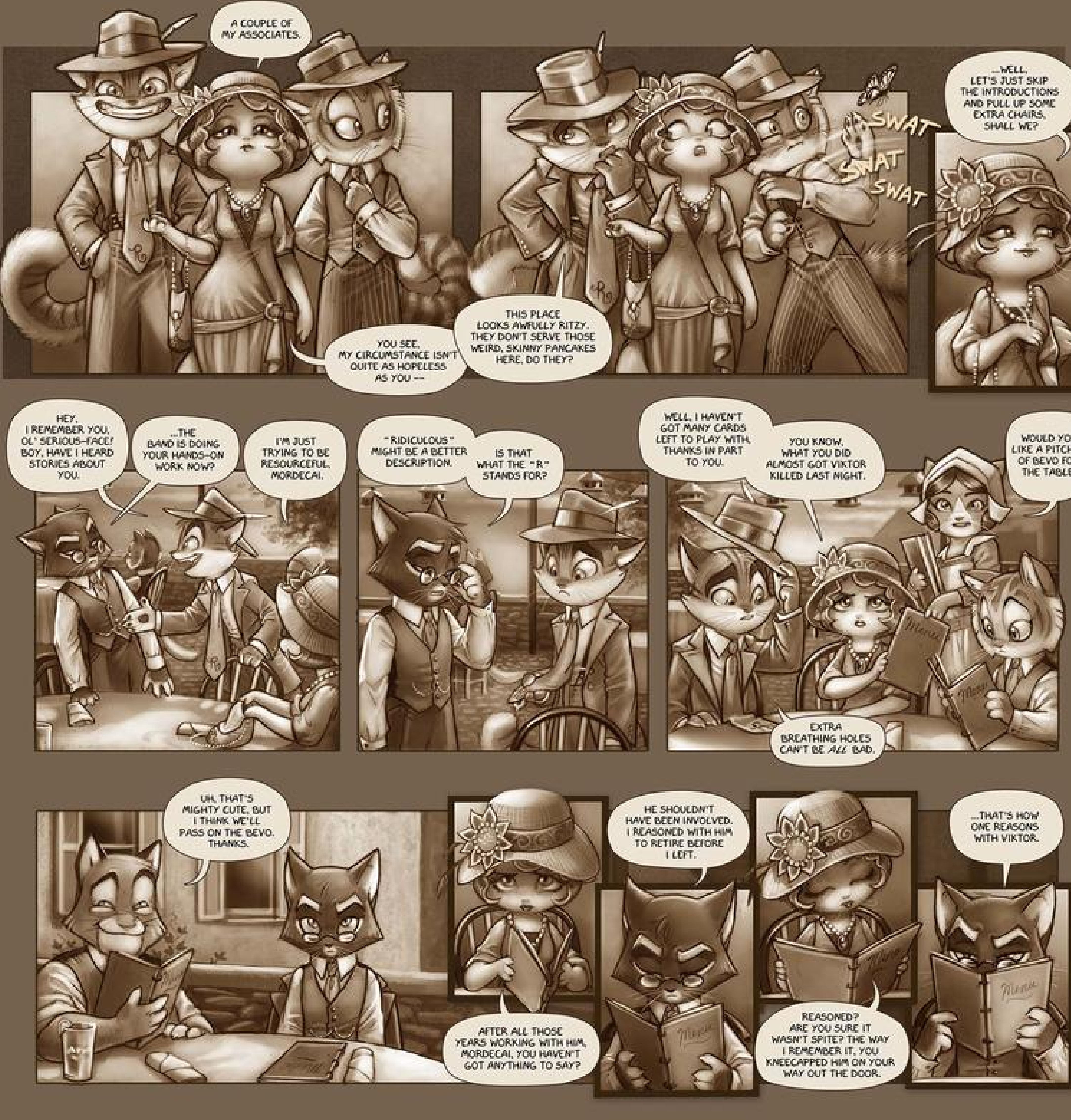
THIS IS ONE OF OURS, ISN'T IT?
IT FOUND ITS WAY HOME LAST NIGHT BEFORE I EVEN KNEW IT WAS GONE.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, MY LITTLE SOIREE WITH THE MONEYBAGS DIDN'T GO EXACTLY AS PLANNED.
IT WASN'T A TOTAL LOSS... BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SIDETRACK TO CONFRONT AN OLD FRIEND ABOUT THAT WAYWARD GOLDEN BOY OF YOURS.
I DON'T THINK WE'D SURVIVE ANY MORE OF HIS PARTING GESTURES.

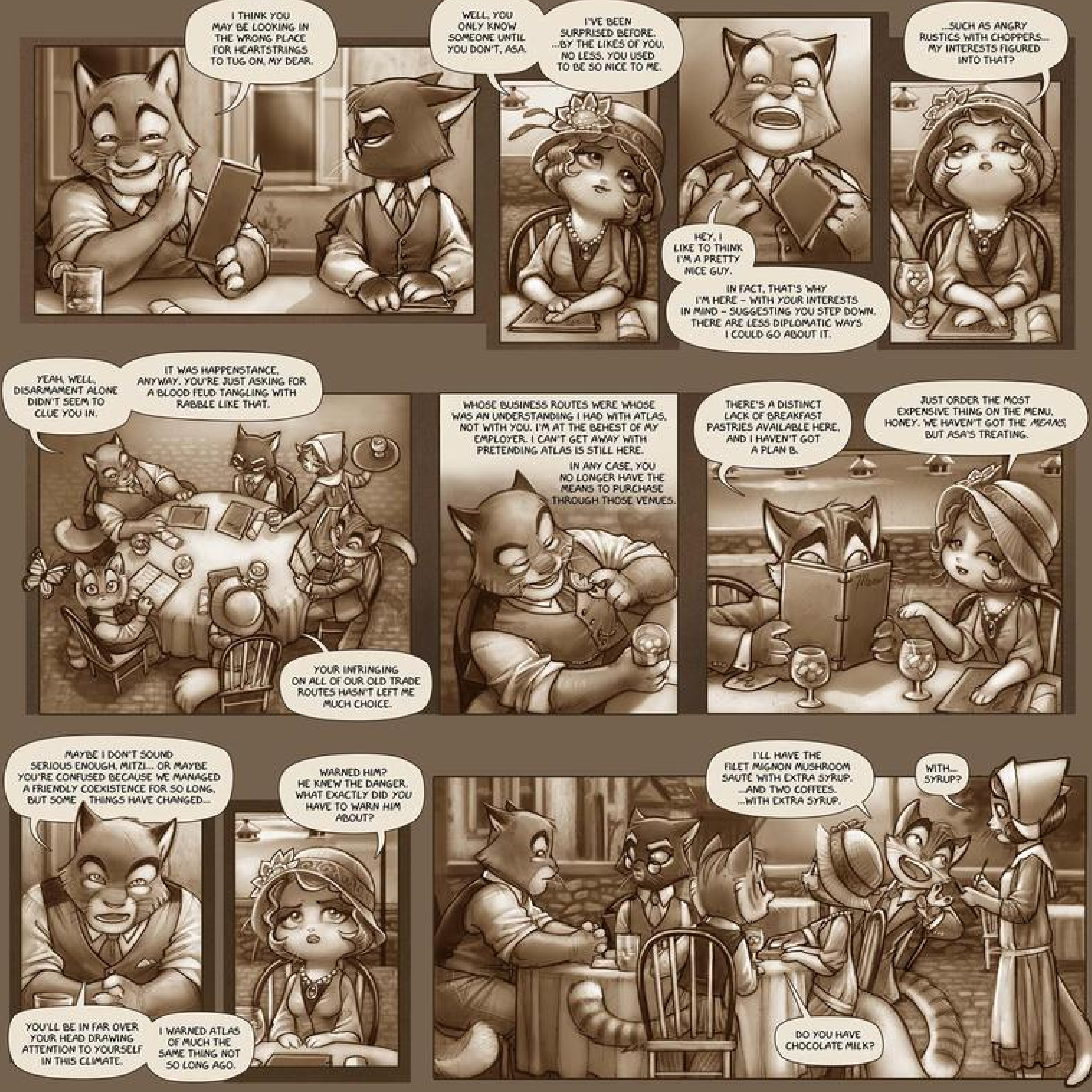

MARIBEL HOTEL. HOW MAY I HELP YOU?
PUT ME THROUGH TO ASA SWEET, PLEASE.
ASA?
MITZI? HOW'S TRICKS? TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE?
OH, I WAS JUST CURIOUS ABOUT A LITTLE SOMETHING, ASA.
UH, WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, SWEETHEART?
YOU AND YOUR TIDY NEW HIREE WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO KNOW HOW THE CONTENTS OF A CERTAIN STORAGE ROOM HERE WOUND UP IN THE HANDS OF A PACK OF VENGEFUL MOONSHINERS, WOULD YOU?
UH. OH. THAT WAS YOU THEY WERE TUSSLING WITH?
I SUSPECT YOU KNEW THAT WHEN YOU EQUIPPED THEM.
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU --
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING. I'M SORRY FOR ANY GRIEF IT CAUSED YOU...
...BUT YOU KNOW, DARLIN', IT BEGS THE QUESTION...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING FIGHTING WITH THE DREGS FOR SLUDGE SKIMMED OFF THE RIVER?
ASA, THAT'S NOT WHAT I CALLED TO --
THAT PLACE YOU'RE RUNNING DOESN'T HAVE MUCH GOING FOR IT THESE DAYS, DOES IT? YOU OUGHTA THINK ABOUT CUTTING YOUR LOSSES BEFORE SOMEONE GETS HURT.
WHAT ASA-
ANYWAY, YOU KNOW IT'S BETTER NOT TO DISCUSS BUSINESS OVER THE PHONE LIKE THIS.
HOW ABOUT AN EARLY LUNCH AT THE MILL, ME AND YOU? WE CAN CATCH UP. AND WE'LL, UH... WE'LL TALK. MY TREAT. ALL RIGHT? RIGHT. ALL RIGHT, BYE.
THE LONGEST DEATH RATTLE I THINK I'VE EVER WITNESSED...
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.
...BUT THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR BETTING ON A BUNCHA PIG RASTLERS TO KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH A LAME HORSE.
NOTHING'S EVER EASY, IS IT? AND THE DOE EYES WON'T MAKE IT ANY EASIER. I WAS HOPING TO AVOID THAT.
YOU SHOULD COME TOO. IT'D PROBABLY PUT HER MORE AT EASE TO SEE A FRIENDLY FACE.
I KID. YOU'RE TERRIFYING.
IT'LL HELP DRIVE THE POINT HOME. C'MON. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

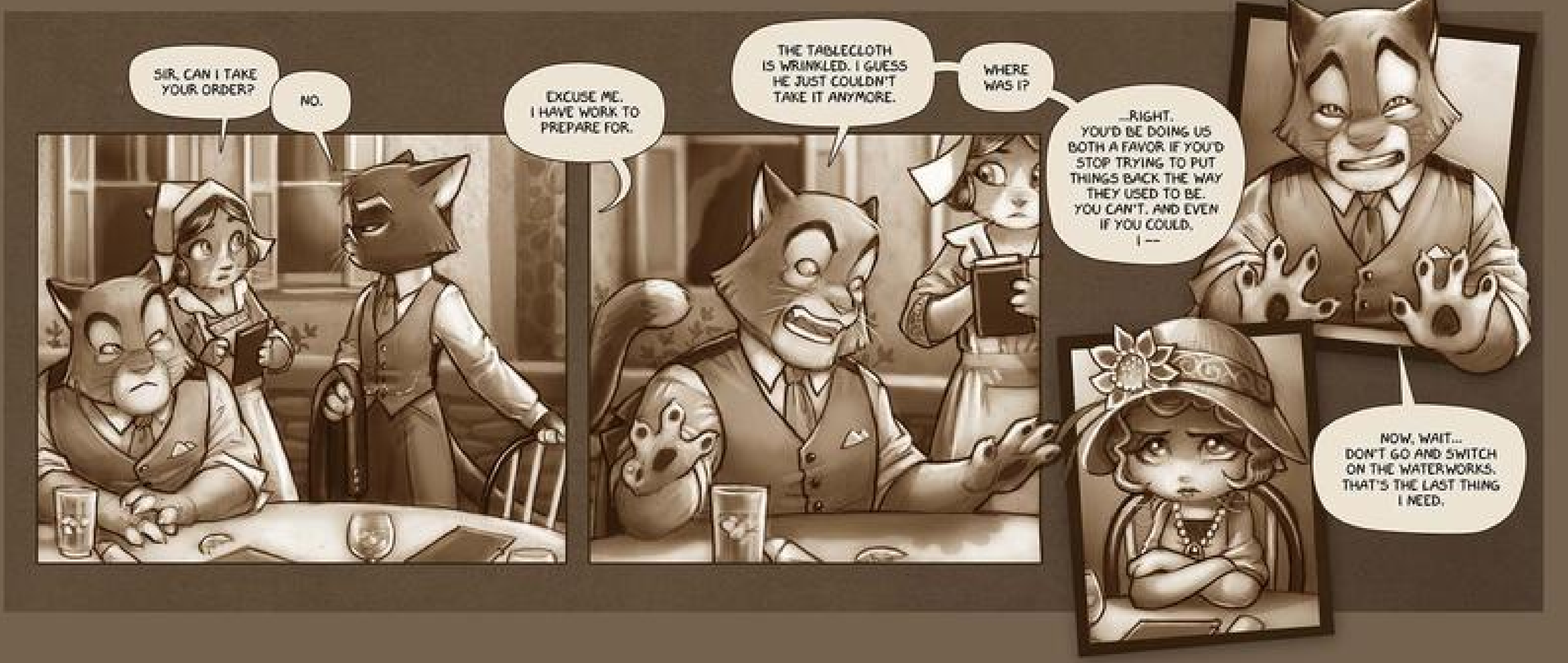

CLICK
KNOCK KNOCK
PARDON. MISS M.?
MISS M.?
KNOCK
KNOCK
EXCUSE ME, MISS M.?
KNOCK
MISS M., LOOK WHAT I BROUGHT! MAH-SCLE!
WELL, FIGURATIVELY.
TAP
AND IT'S JUST WHAT VIKTOR SAID I WAS LACKING. WHY, WITH OUR UNIQUE TALENTS COMBINED, JUST IMAGINE HOW VERY NEARLY COMPETENT WE COULD BE!
GRANTED, FOR MUSCLE, HE'S A LITTLE ON THE SCRAWNY SIDE, BUT THAT JUST MEANS HE'S LOW UPKEEP.
I CALCULATE WE COULD KEEP HIM FOR ABOUT A PEANUT A DAY.
YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT, CAN'T YOU?
OH, PLEEEASE IMAGINE.
THUNK
...MISS M.?
HOW WOULD YOU BOYS LIKE SOME LUNCH?

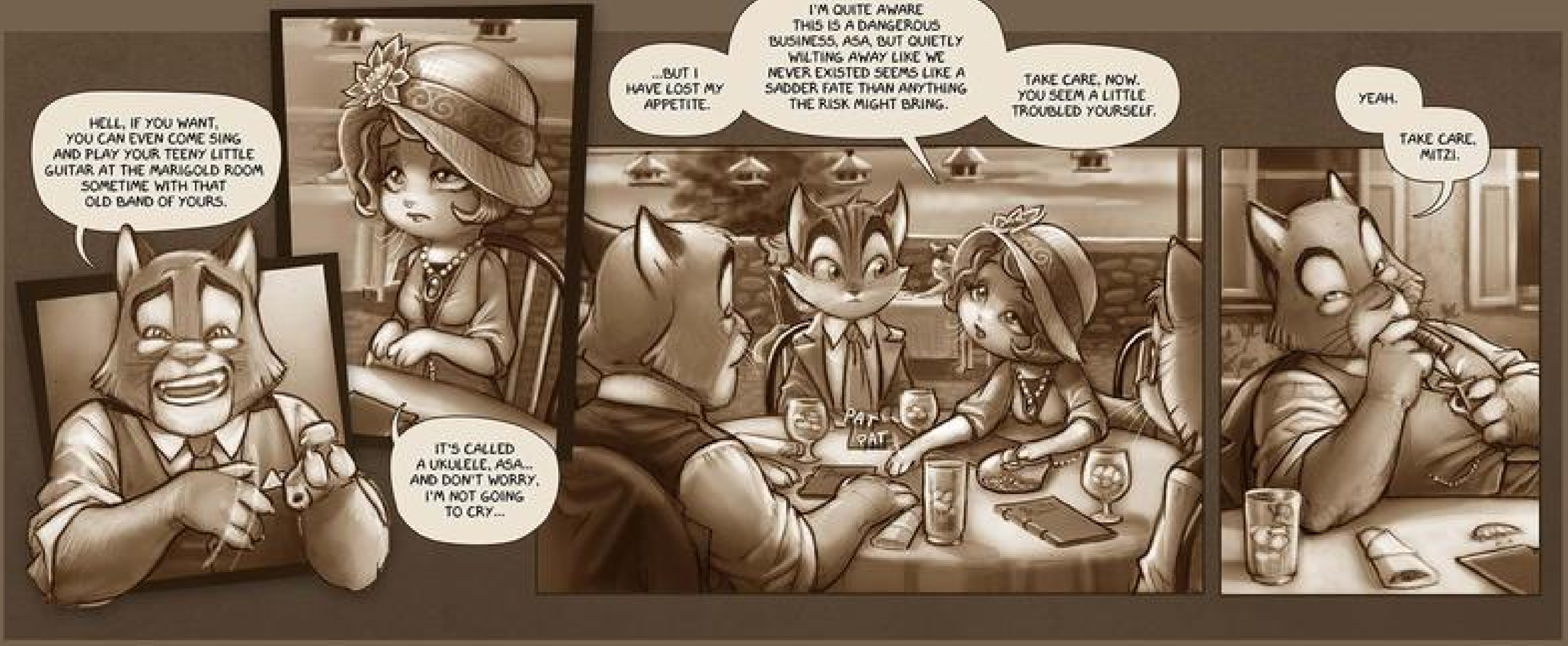

YOU LOOK MORE SOUR THAN USUAL.
WHAT'S THE MATTER? THE NAPKINS AREN'T FOLDED RIGHT?
I HAVE... MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT PROLONGING MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THIS SITUATION.
IT SEEMS LIKE AN UNNECESSARY DISTRACTION FROM THE WORK I'VE BEEN TASKED WITH.
MIXED FEELINGS, HUH? MIXED BETWEEN WHAT - VAGUELY ANNOYED AND MODERATELY ANNOYED?

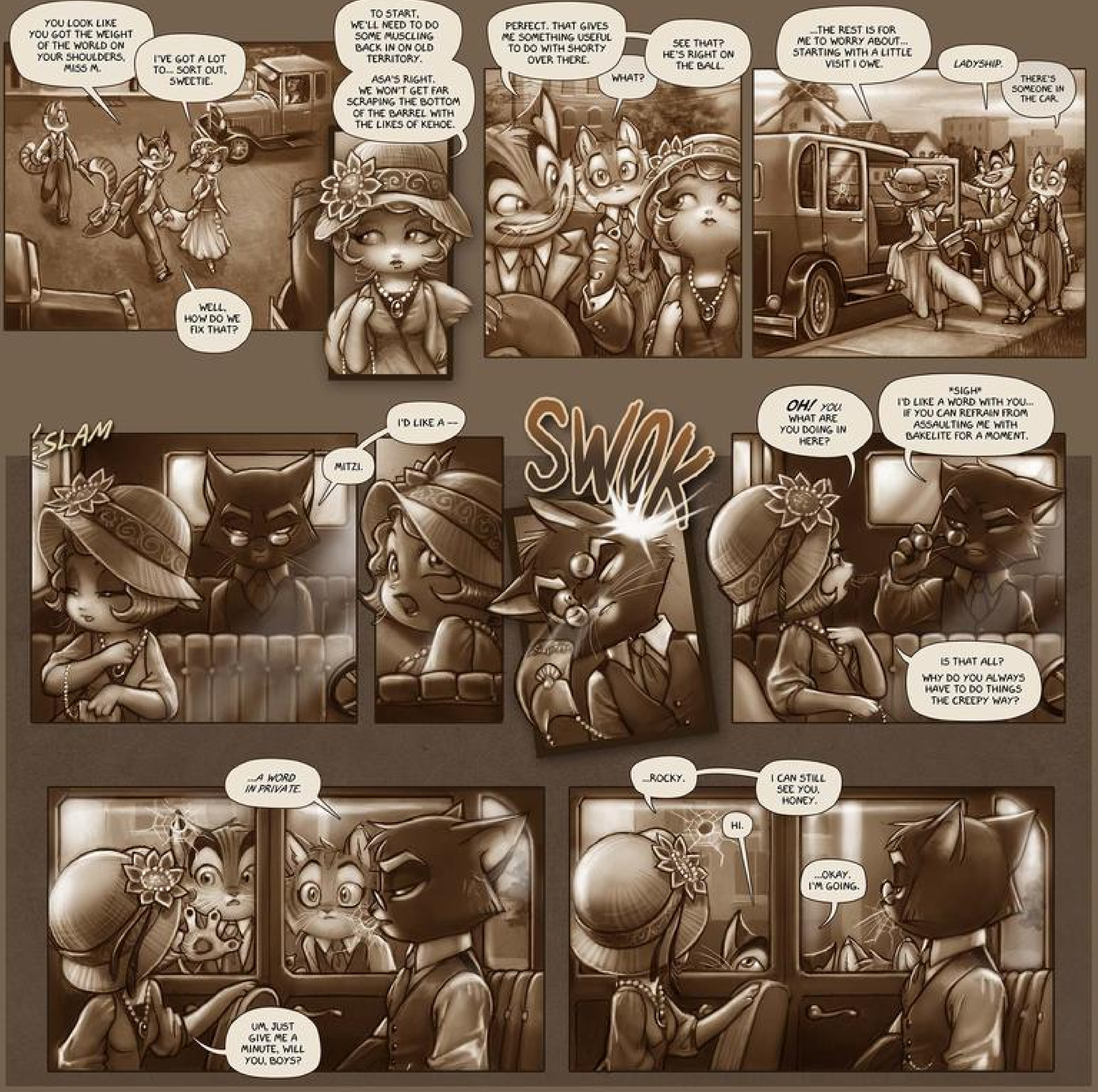

YOU'RE SORT OF A ONE-TRICK PONY IN THE FEELINGS DEPARTMENT.
CRUNCH CRUNCH
WELL, NOW YOU'RE DEFINITELY ANNOYED. I HOPE THAT CLEARS THINGS UP FOR YOU.
ANYWAY, I'M NOT THRILLED TO BE HERE EITHER... BUT YOU'D UNDERSTAND WHY IT'S NECESSARY IF YOU WERE IN MY SHOES.
DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND AVOID POSITIONS IN MANAGEMENT.
OH! MITZI. HOW ARE YA, DOLLFACE?
CONFOUNDED, ASA... AND I SEE YOU BROUGHT A HELPING OF SALT TO RUB IN MY WOUNDS TOO.
HEH. RIGHT. AND YOU BROUGHT, UH...

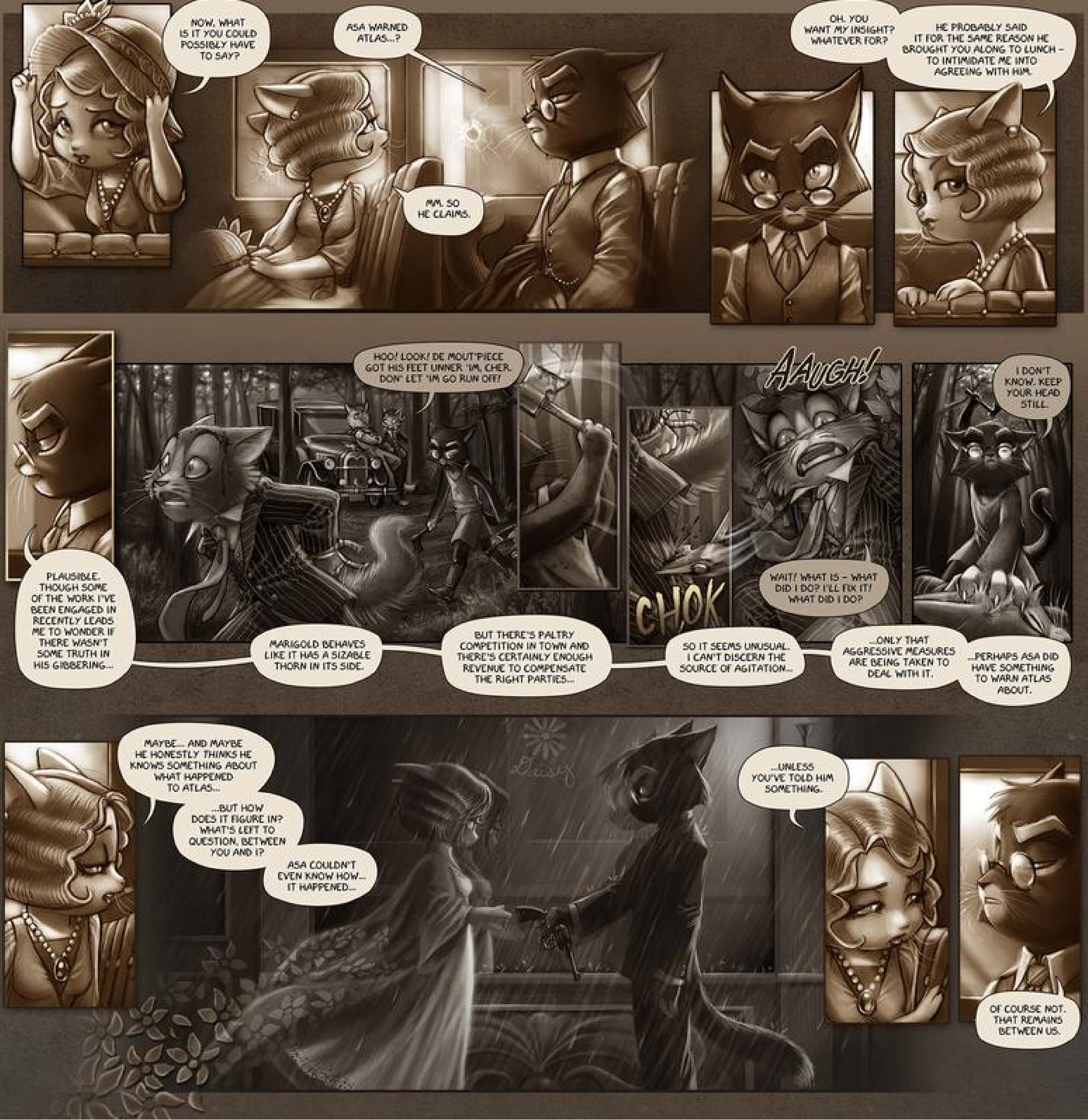

A COUPLE OF MY ASSOCIATES.
YOU SEE, MY CIRCUMSTANCE ISN'T QUITE AS HOPELESS AS YOU --
THIS PLACE LOOKS AWFULLY RITZY. THEY DON'T SERVE THOSE WEIRD, SKINNY PANCAKES HERE, DO THEY?
SWAT
SWAT
SWAT
...WELL, LET'S JUST SKIP THE INTRODUCTIONS AND PULL UP SOME EXTRA CHAIRS, SHALL WE?
HEY, I REMEMBER YOU, OL' SERIOUS-FACE! BOY, HAVE I HEARD STORIES ABOUT YOU.
...THE BAND IS DOING YOUR HANDS-ON WORK NOW?
I'M JUST TRYING TO BE RESOURCEFUL, MORDECAI.
"RIDICULOUS" MIGHT BE A BETTER DESCRIPTION.
IS THAT WHAT THE "R" STANDS FOR?
WELL, I HAVEN'T GOT MANY CARDS LEFT TO PLAY WITH, THANKS IN PART TO YOU.
YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU DID ALMOST GOT VIKTOR KILLED LAST NIGHT.
EXTRA BREATHING HOLES CAN'T BE *ALL* BAD.
WOULD YOU LIKE A PITCHER OF BEVO FOR THE TABLE?
UH, THAT'S MIGHTY CUTE, BUT I THINK WE'LL PASS ON THE BEVO. THANKS.
AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS WORKING WITH HIM, MORDECAI, YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANYTHING TO SAY?
HE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN INVOLVED. I REASONED WITH HIM TO RETIRE BEFORE I LEFT.
REASONED? ARE YOU SURE IT WASN'T SPITE? THE WAY I REMEMBER IT, YOU KNEECAPPED HIM ON YOUR WAY OUT THE DOOR.
...THAT'S HOW ONE REASONS WITH VIKTOR.

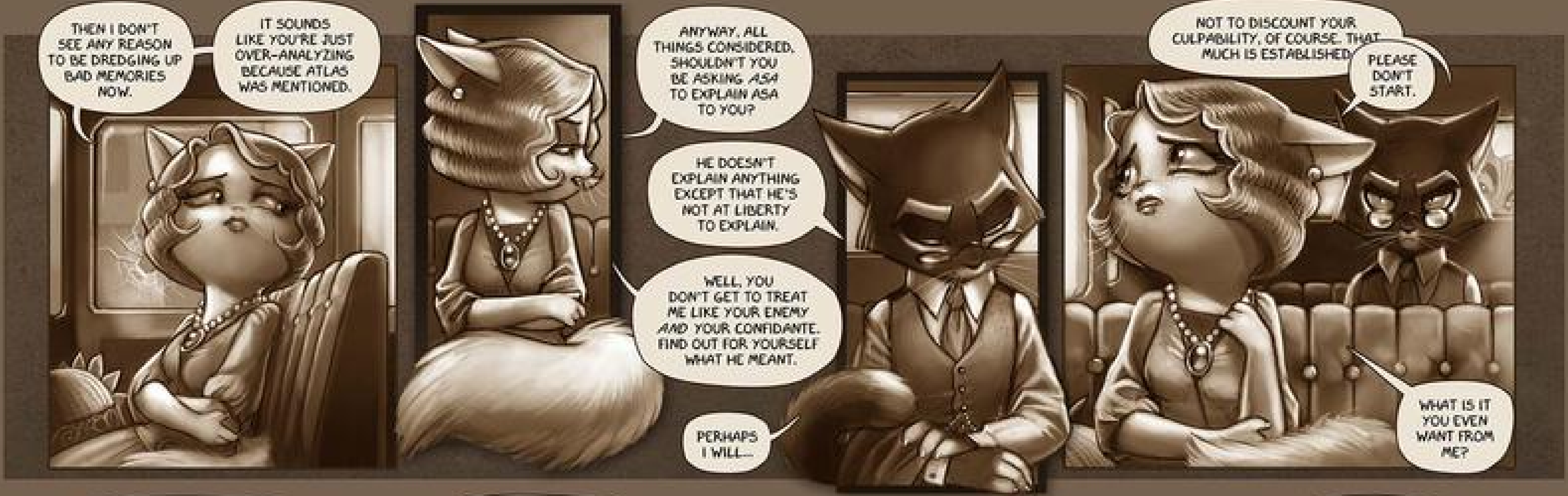

I THINK YOU MAY BE LOOKING IN THE WRONG PLACE FOR HEARTSTRINGS TO TUG ON, MY DEAR.
WELL, YOU ONLY KNOW SOMEONE UNTIL YOU DON'T, ASA.
I'VE BEEN SURPRISED BEFORE. ...BY THE LIKES OF YOU, NO LESS. YOU USED TO BE SO NICE TO ME.
HEY, I LIKE TO THINK I'M A PRETTY NICE GUY.
IN FACT, THAT'S WHY I'M HERE – WITH YOUR INTERESTS IN MIND – SUGGESTING YOU STEP DOWN. THERE ARE LESS DIPLOMATIC WAYS I COULD GO ABOUT IT.
...SUCH AS ANGRY RUSTICS WITH CHOPPERS... MY INTERESTS FIGURED INTO THAT?
YEAH, WELL, DISARMAMENT ALONE DIDN'T SEEM TO CLUE YOU IN.
IT WAS HAPPENSTANCE, ANYWAY. YOU'RE JUST ASKING FOR A BLOOD FEUD TANGLING WITH RABBLE LIKE THAT.
YOUR INFRINGING ON ALL OF OUR OLD TRADE ROUTES HASN'T LEFT ME MUCH CHOICE.
WHOSE BUSINESS ROUTES WERE WHOSE WAS AN UNDERSTANDING I HAD WITH ATLAS, NOT WITH YOU. I'M AT THE BEHEST OF MY EMPLOYER. I CAN'T GET AWAY WITH PRETENDING ATLAS IS STILL HERE.
IN ANY CASE, YOU NO LONGER HAVE THE MEANS TO PURCHASE THROUGH THOSE VENUES.
THERE'S A DISTINCT LACK OF BREAKFAST PASTRIES AVAILABLE HERE, AND I HAVEN'T GOT A PLAN B.
JUST ORDER THE MOST EXPENSIVE THING ON THE MENU, HONEY. WE HAVEN'T GOT THE *MEANS*, BUT ASA'S TREATING.
MAYBE I DON'T SOUND SERIOUS ENOUGH, MITZI... OR MAYBE YOU'RE CONFUSED BECAUSE WE MANAGED A FRIENDLY COEXISTENCE FOR SO LONG, BUT SOME THINGS HAVE CHANGED...
YOU'LL BE IN FAR OVER YOUR HEAD DRAWING ATTENTION TO YOURSELF IN THIS CLIMATE.
I WARNED ATLAS OF MUCH THE SAME THING NOT SO LONG AGO.
WARNED HIM? HE KNEW THE DANGER. WHAT EXACTLY DID *YOU* HAVE TO WARN HIM ABOUT?
I'LL HAVE THE FILET MIGNON MUSHROOM SAUTÉ WITH EXTRA SYRUP. ...AND TWO COFFEES. ...WITH EXTRA SYRUP.
WITH... SYRUP?
DO YOU HAVE CHOCOLATE MILK?

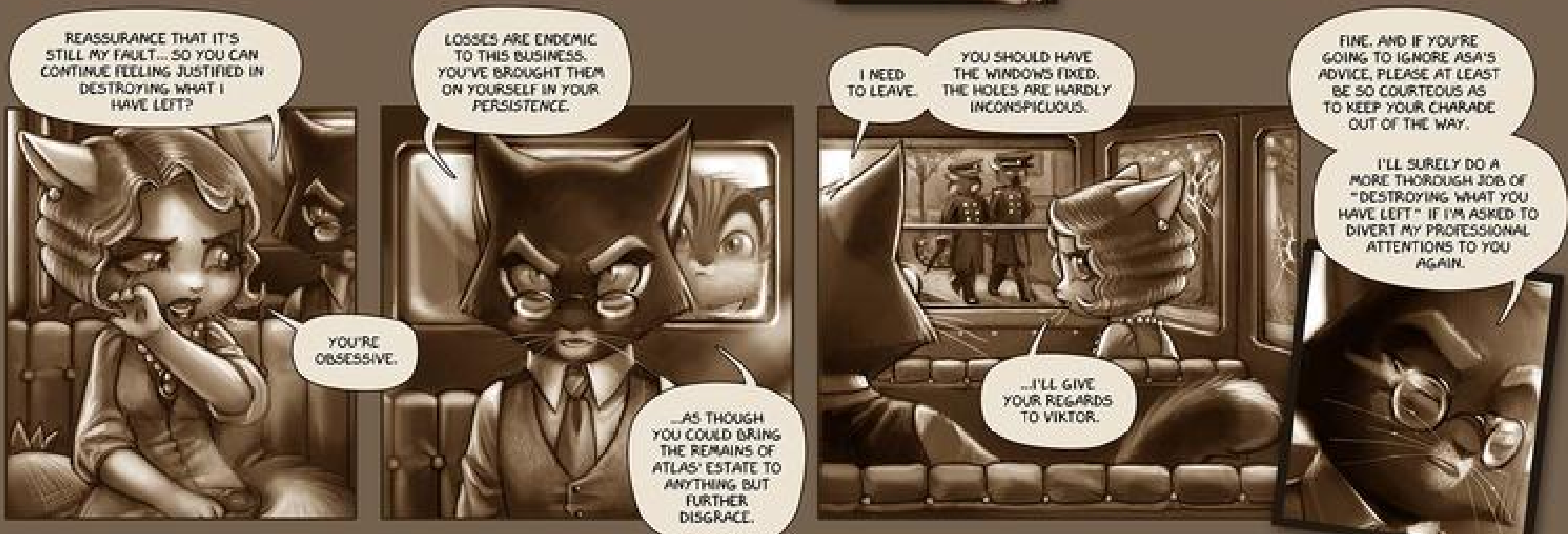

SIR, CAN I TAKE YOUR ORDER?
NO.
EXCUSE ME. I HAVE WORK TO PREPARE FOR.
THE TABLECLOTH IS WRINKLED. I GUESS HE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
WHERE WAS I?
...RIGHT. YOU'D BE DOING US BOTH A FAVOR IF YOU'D STOP TRYING TO PUT THINGS BACK THE WAY THEY USED TO BE. YOU CAN'T. AND EVEN IF YOU COULD. I --
NOW, WAIT... DON'T GO AND SWITCH ON THE WATERWORKS. THAT'S THE LAST THING I NEED.

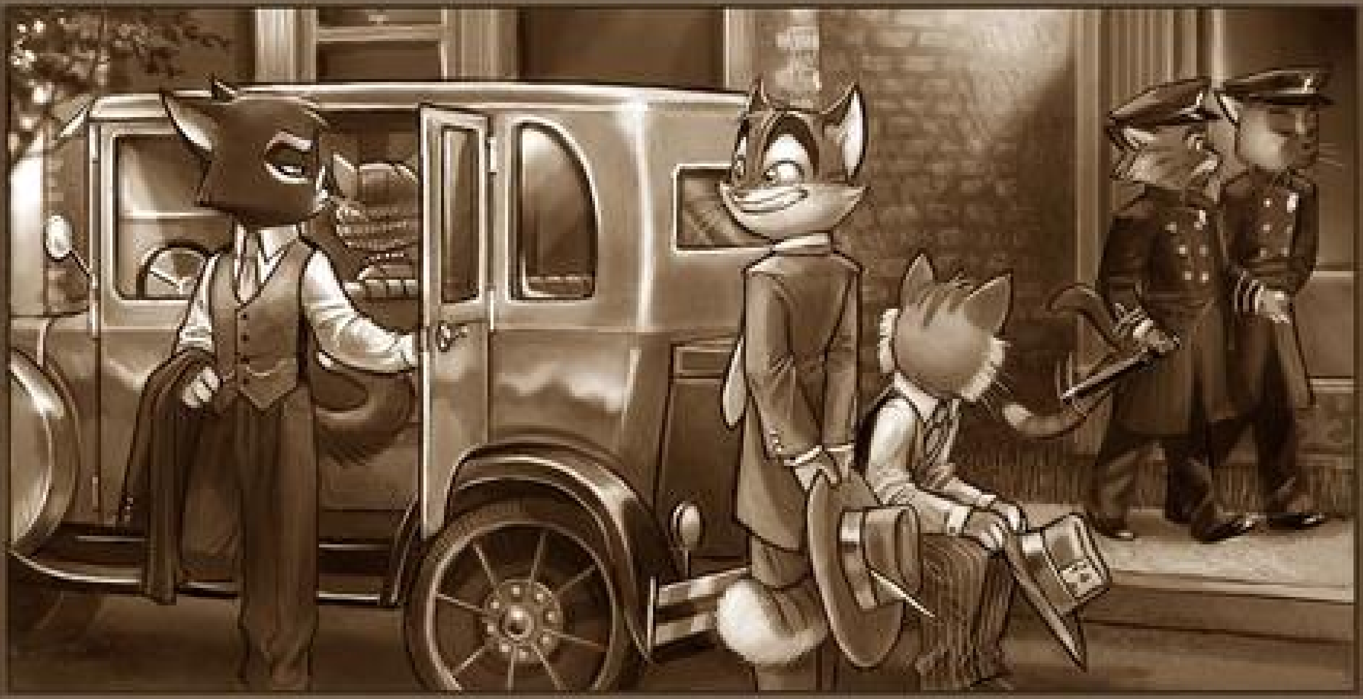

HELL, IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN EVEN COME SING AND PLAY YOUR TEENY LITTLE GUITAR AT THE MARIGOLD ROOM SOMETIME WITH THAT OLD BAND OF YOURS.
IT'S CALLED A UKULELE, ASA... AND DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT GOING TO CRY...
...BUT I HAVE LOST MY APPETITE.
I'M QUITE AWARE THIS IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS, ASA, BUT QUIETLY WILTING AWAY LIKE WE NEVER EXISTED SEEMS LIKE A SADDER FATE THAN ANYTHING THE RISK MIGHT BRING.
PAT PAT
TAKE CARE, NOW. YOU SEEM A LITTLE TROUBLED YOURSELF.
YEAH.
TAKE CARE, MITZI.

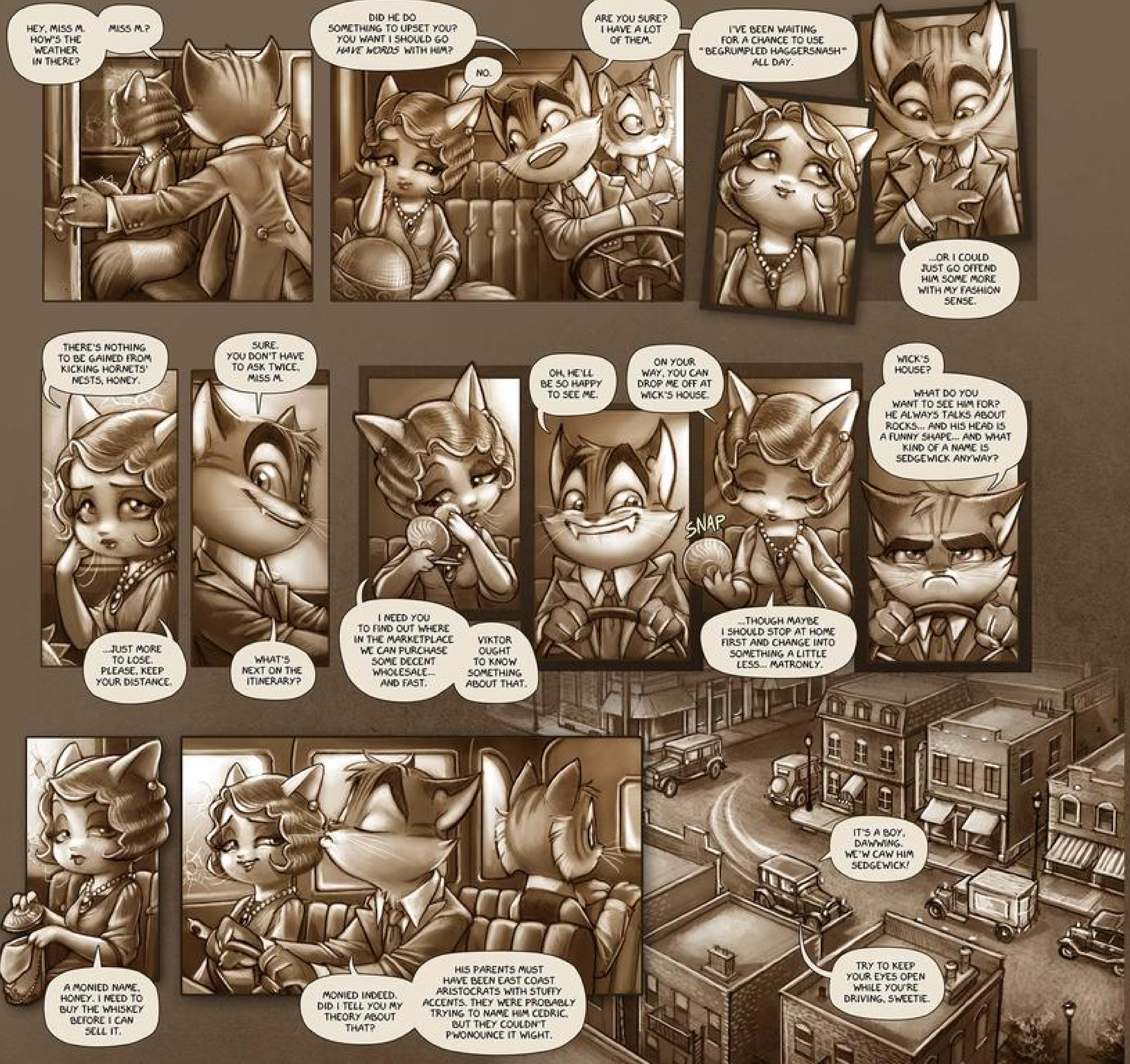

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU GOT THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD ON YOUR SHOULDERS, MISS M.
I'VE GOT A LOT TO... SORT OUT, SWEETIE.
WELL, HOW DO WE FIX THAT?
TO START, WE'LL NEED TO DO SOME MUSCLING BACK IN ON OLD TERRITORY.
ASA'S RIGHT. WE WON'T GET FAR SCRAPING THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL WITH THE LIKES OF KEHOE.
PERFECT. THAT GIVES ME SOMETHING USEFUL TO DO WITH SHORTY OVER THERE.
WHAT?
SEE THAT? HE'S RIGHT ON THE BALL.
...THE REST IS FOR ME TO WORRY ABOUT... STARTING WITH A LITTLE VISIT I OWE.
LADYSHIP.
THERE'S SOMEONE IN THE CAR.
SLAM
MITZI.
I'D LIKE A —
SWOK
OH! YOU. WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
SIGH I'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU... IF YOU CAN REFRAIN FROM ASSAULTING ME WITH BAKELITE FOR A MOMENT.
IS THAT ALL? WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO DO THINGS THE CREEPY WAY?
...A WORD IN PRIVATE.
UM, JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE, WILL YOU, BOYS?
...ROCKY.
I CAN STILL SEE YOU, HONEY.
HI.
...OKAY, I'M GOING.

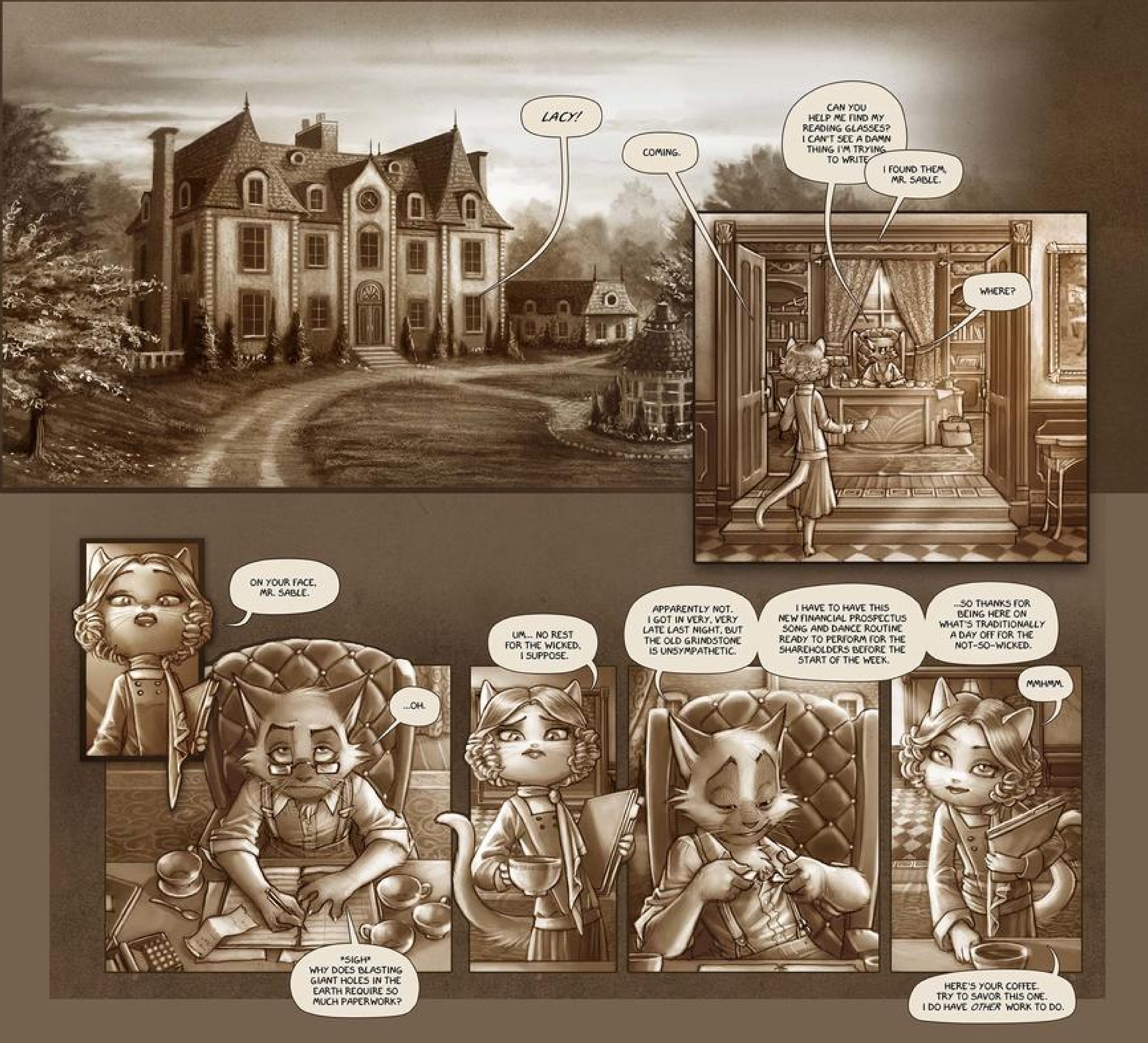

NOW, WHAT IS IT YOU COULD POSSIBLY HAVE TO SAY?
ASA WARNED ATLAS...?
MM. SO HE CLAIMS.
OH. YOU WANT MY INSIGHT? WHATEVER FOR?
HE PROBABLY SAID IT FOR THE SAME REASON HE BROUGHT YOU ALONG TO LUNCH – TO INTIMIDATE ME INTO AGREEING WITH HIM.
PLAUSIBLE. THOUGH SOME OF THE WORK I'VE BEEN ENGAGED IN RECENTLY LEADS ME TO WONDER IF THERE WASN'T SOME TRUTH IN HIS GIBBERING...
HOO! LOOK! DE MOUT'PIECE GOT HIS FEET UNNER 'IM, CHER. DON' LET 'IM GO RUN OFF!
MARIGOLD BEHAVES LIKE IT HAS A SIZABLE THORN IN ITS SIDE.
BUT THERE'S PALTRY COMPETITION IN TOWN AND THERE'S CERTAINLY ENOUGH REVENUE TO COMPENSATE THE RIGHT PARTIES...
CHOK
AAUGH!
WAIT! WHAT IS – WHAT DID I DO? I'LL FIX IT! WHAT DID I DO?
SO IT SEEMS UNUSUAL. I CAN'T DISCERN THE SOURCE OF AGITATION...
...ONLY THAT AGGRESSIVE MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO DEAL WITH IT.
I DON'T KNOW. KEEP YOUR HEAD STILL.
...PERHAPS ASA DID HAVE SOMETHING TO WARN ATLAS ABOUT.
MAYBE... AND MAYBE HE HONESTLY THINKS HE KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ATLAS...
...BUT HOW DOES IT FIGURE IN? WHAT'S LEFT TO QUESTION, BETWEEN YOU AND I?
ASA COULDN'T EVEN KNOW HOW... IT HAPPENED...
Daisy
...UNLESS YOU'VE TOLD HIM SOMETHING.
OF COURSE NOT. THAT REMAINS BETWEEN US.

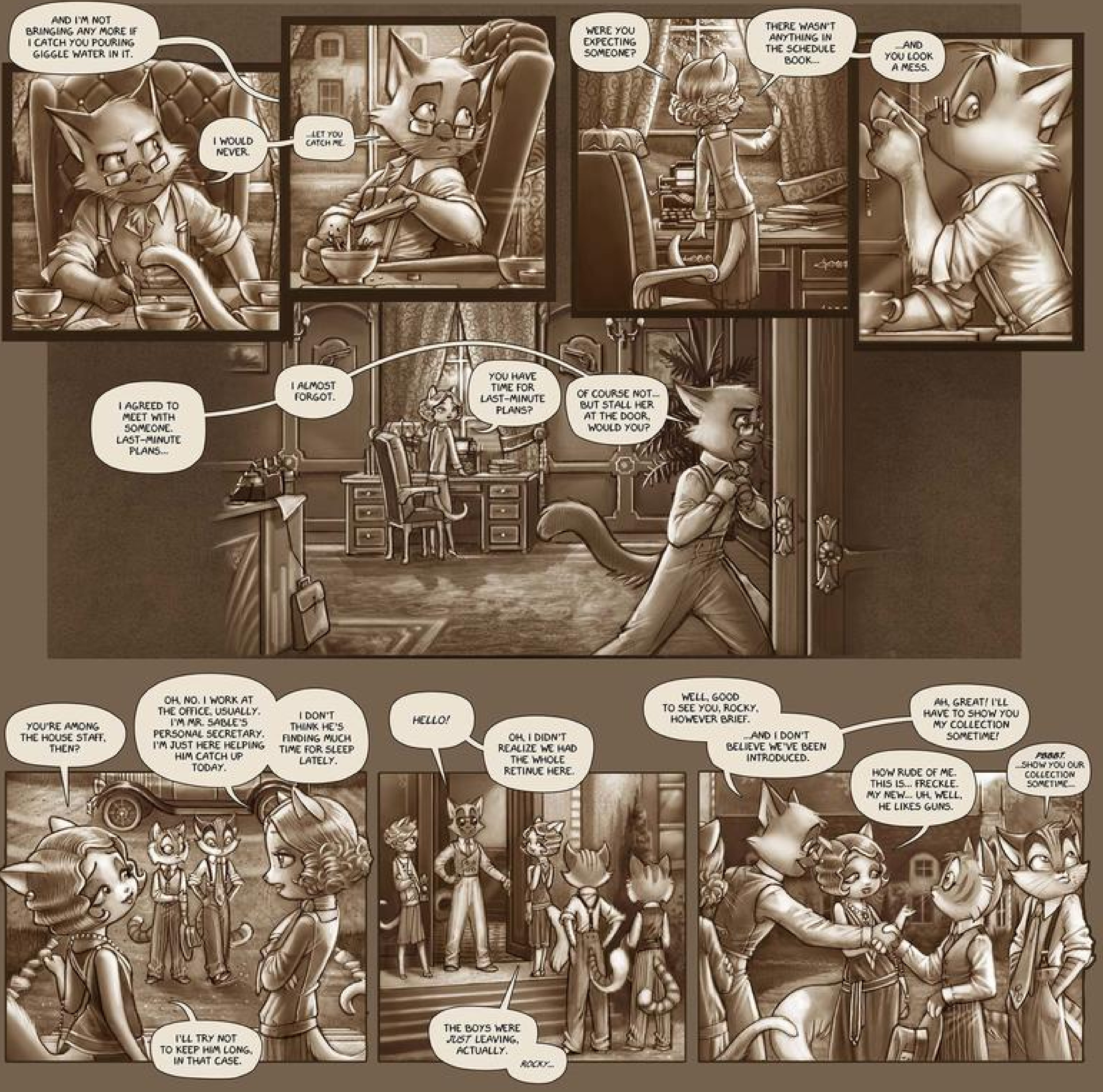

THEN I DON'T SEE ANY REASON TO BE DREDGING UP BAD MEMORIES NOW.
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE JUST OVER-ANALYZING BECAUSE ATLAS WAS MENTIONED.
ANYWAY, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, SHOULDN'T YOU BE ASKING *ASA* TO EXPLAIN ASA TO YOU?
HE DOESN'T EXPLAIN ANYTHING EXCEPT THAT HE'S NOT AT LIBERTY TO EXPLAIN.
WELL, YOU DON'T GET TO TREAT ME LIKE YOUR ENEMY *AND* YOUR CONFIDANTE. FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF WHAT HE MEANT.
PERHAPS I WILL...
NOT TO DISCOUNT YOUR CULPABILITY, OF COURSE. THAT MUCH IS ESTABLISHED.
PLEASE DON'T START.
WHAT IS IT YOU EVEN WANT FROM ME?

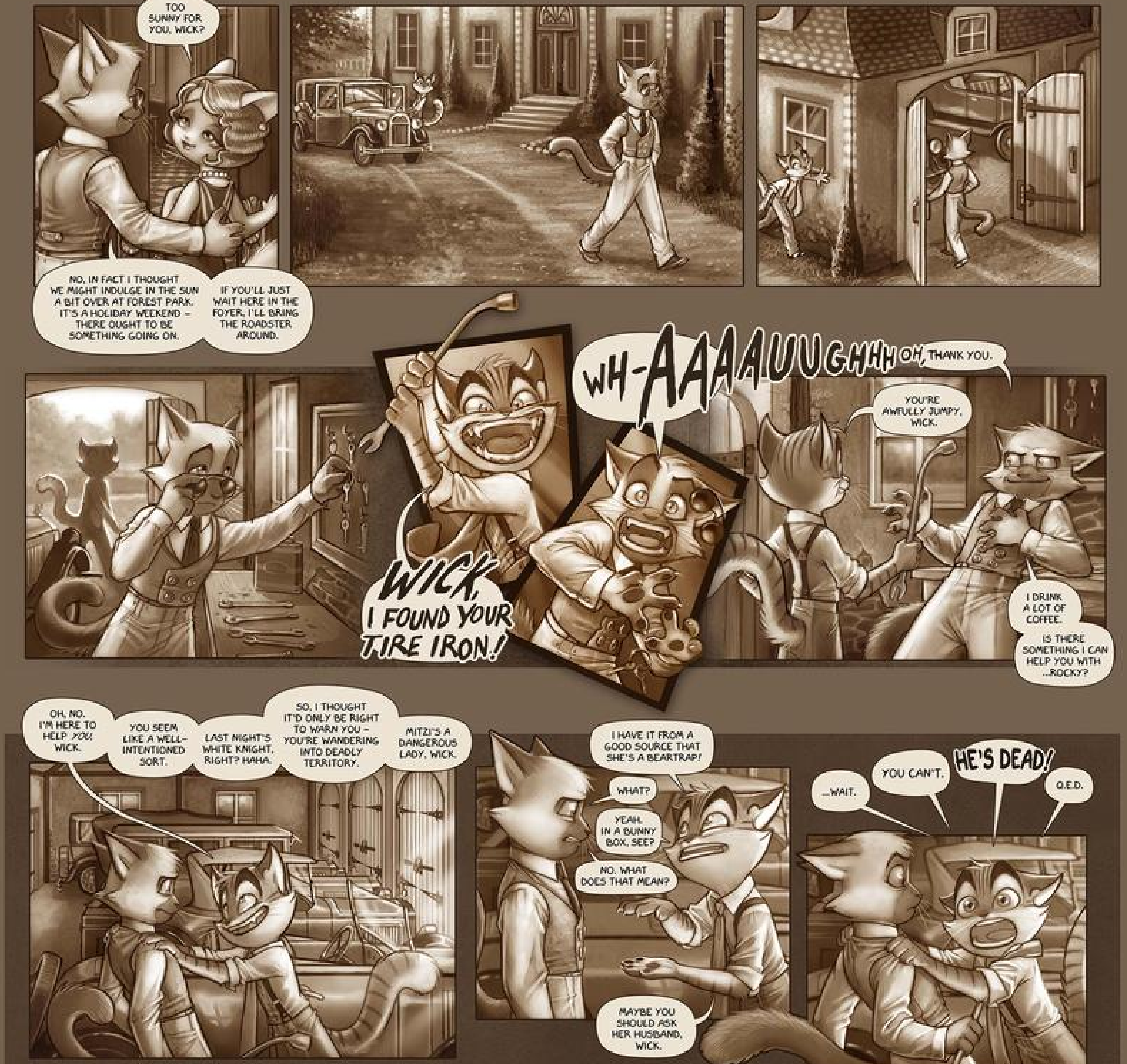

REASSURANCE THAT IT'S STILL MY FAULT... SO YOU CAN CONTINUE FEELING JUSTIFIED IN DESTROYING WHAT I HAVE LEFT?
YOU'RE OBSESSIVE.
LOSSES ARE ENDEMIC TO THIS BUSINESS. YOU'VE BROUGHT THEM ON YOURSELF IN YOUR *PERSISTENCE*.
...AS THOUGH YOU COULD BRING THE REMAINS OF ATLAS' ESTATE TO ANYTHING BUT FURTHER DISGRACE.
I NEED TO LEAVE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE THE WINDOWS FIXED. THE HOLES ARE HARDLY INCONSPICUOUS.
...I'LL GIVE YOUR REGARDS TO VIKTOR.
FINE. AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO IGNORE ASA'S ADVICE, PLEASE AT LEAST BE SO COURTEOUS AS TO KEEP YOUR CHARADE OUT OF THE WAY.
I'LL SURELY DO A MORE THOROUGH JOB OF "DESTROYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEFT" IF I'M ASKED TO DIVERT MY PROFESSIONAL ATTENTIONS TO YOU AGAIN.

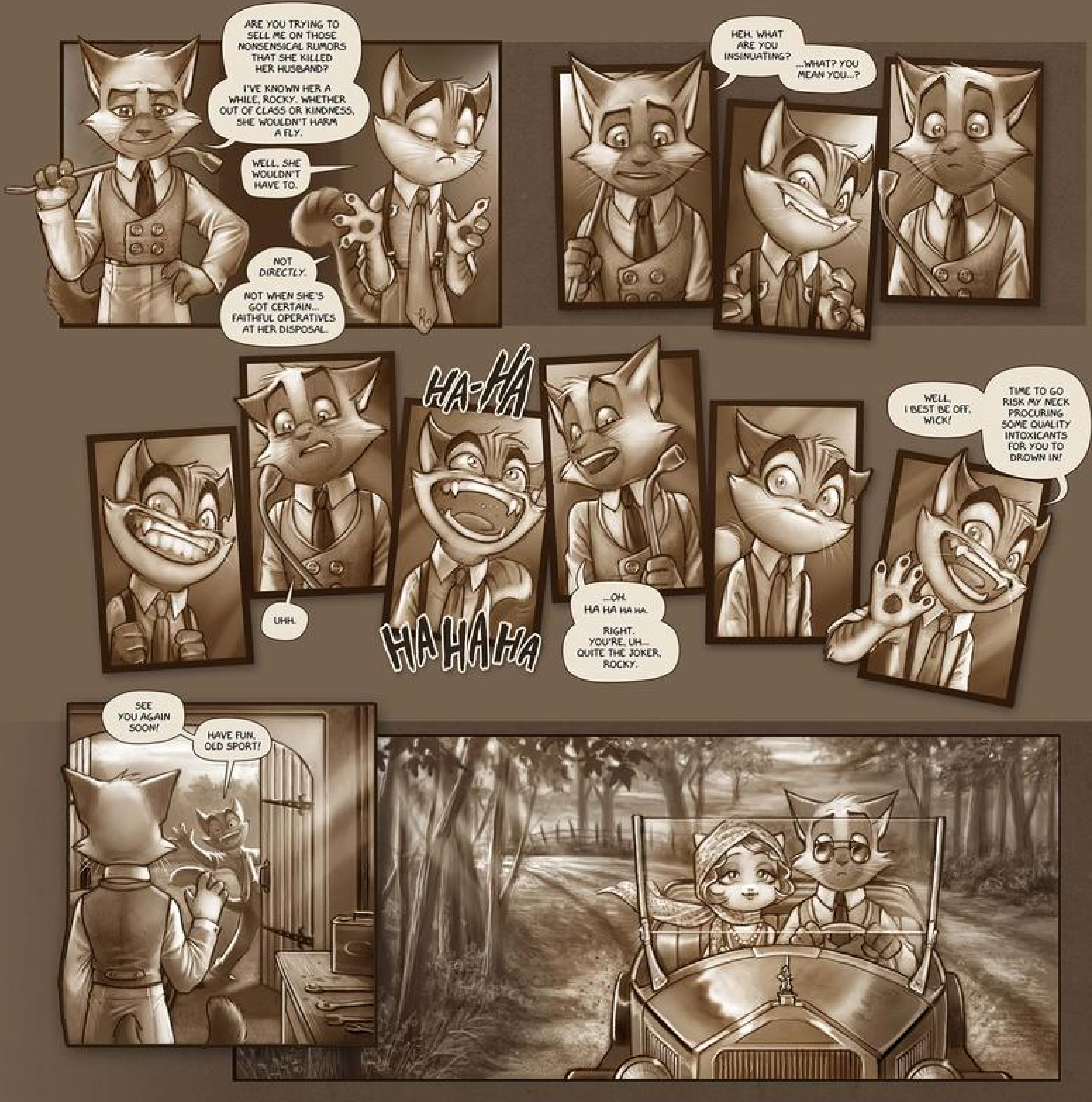


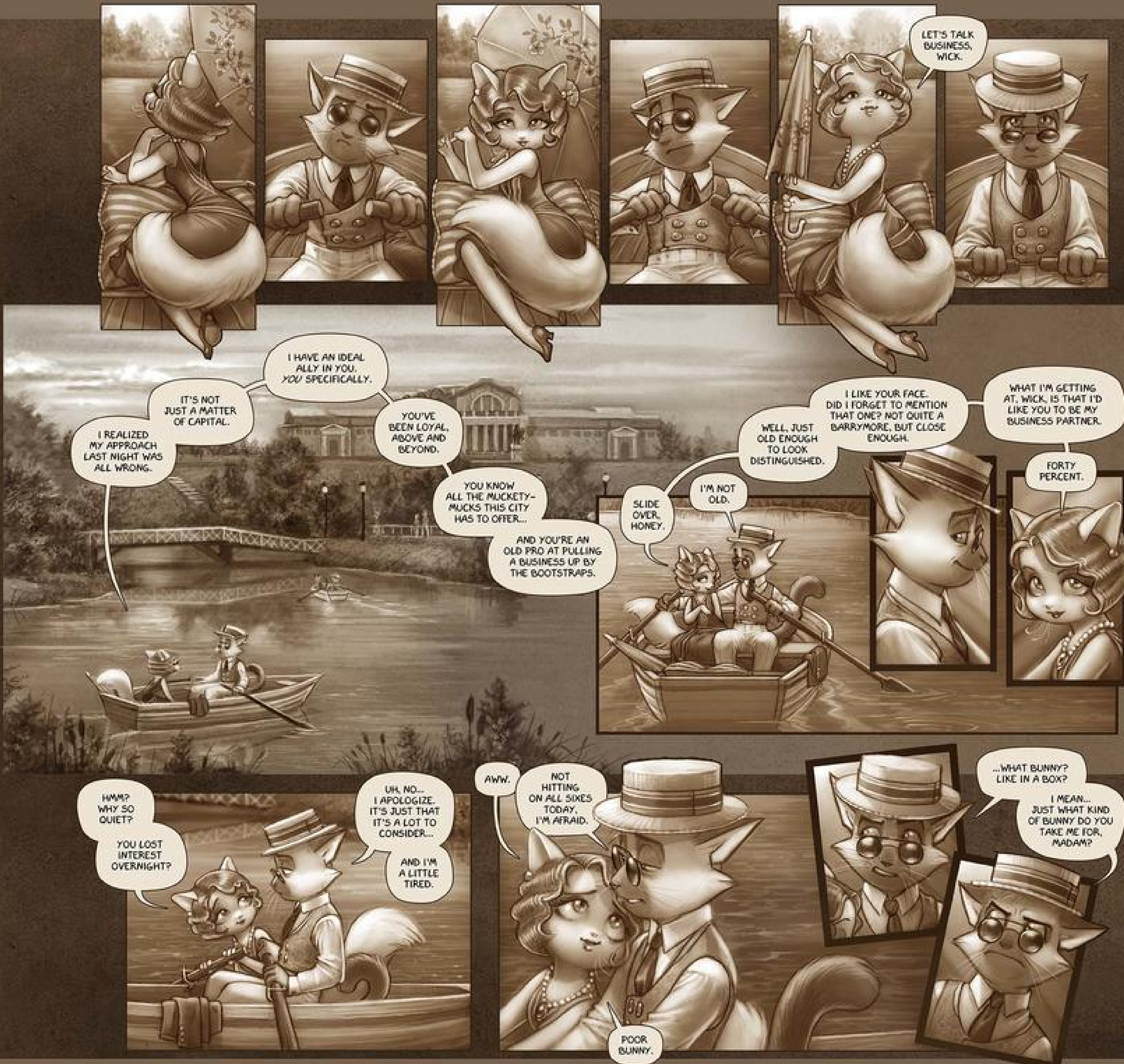

HEY, MISS M. HOW'S THE WEATHER IN THERE?
MISS M.?
DID HE DO SOMETHING TO UPSET YOU? YOU WANT I SHOULD GO *HAVE WORDS* WITH HIM?
NO.
ARE YOU SURE? I HAVE A LOT OF THEM.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO USE "BEGRUMPLED HAGGERSNASH" ALL DAY.
...OR I COULD JUST GO OFFEND HIM SOME MORE WITH MY FASHION SENSE.
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE GAINED FROM KICKING HORNETS' NESTS, HONEY.
...JUST MORE TO LOSE. PLEASE, KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.
SURE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK TWICE, MISS M.
WHAT'S NEXT ON THE ITINERARY?
I NEED YOU TO FIND OUT WHERE IN THE MARKETPLACE WE CAN PURCHASE SOME DECENT WHOLESALE... AND FAST.
VIKTOR OUGHT TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.
OH, HE'LL BE SO HAPPY TO SEE ME.
ON YOUR WAY, YOU CAN DROP ME OFF AT WICK'S HOUSE.
SNAP
...THOUGH MAYBE I SHOULD STOP AT HOME FIRST AND CHANGE INTO SOMETHING A LITTLE LESS... MATRONLY.
WICK'S HOUSE?
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM FOR? HE ALWAYS TALKS ABOUT ROCKS... AND HIS HEAD IS A FUNNY SHAPE... AND WHAT KIND OF A NAME IS SEDGEWICK ANYWAY?
A MONIED NAME, HONEY. I NEED TO BUY THE WHISKEY BEFORE I CAN SELL IT.
MONIED INDEED. DID I TELL YOU MY THEORY ABOUT THAT?
HIS PARENTS MUST HAVE BEEN EAST COAST ARISTOCRATS WITH STUFFY ACCENTS. THEY WERE PROBABLY TRYING TO NAME HIM CEDRIC, BUT THEY COULDN'T PWONOUNCE IT WIGHT.
IT'S A BOY, DAWWING. WE'W CAW HIM SEDGEWICK!
TRY TO KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN WHILE YOU'RE DRIVING, SWEETIE.

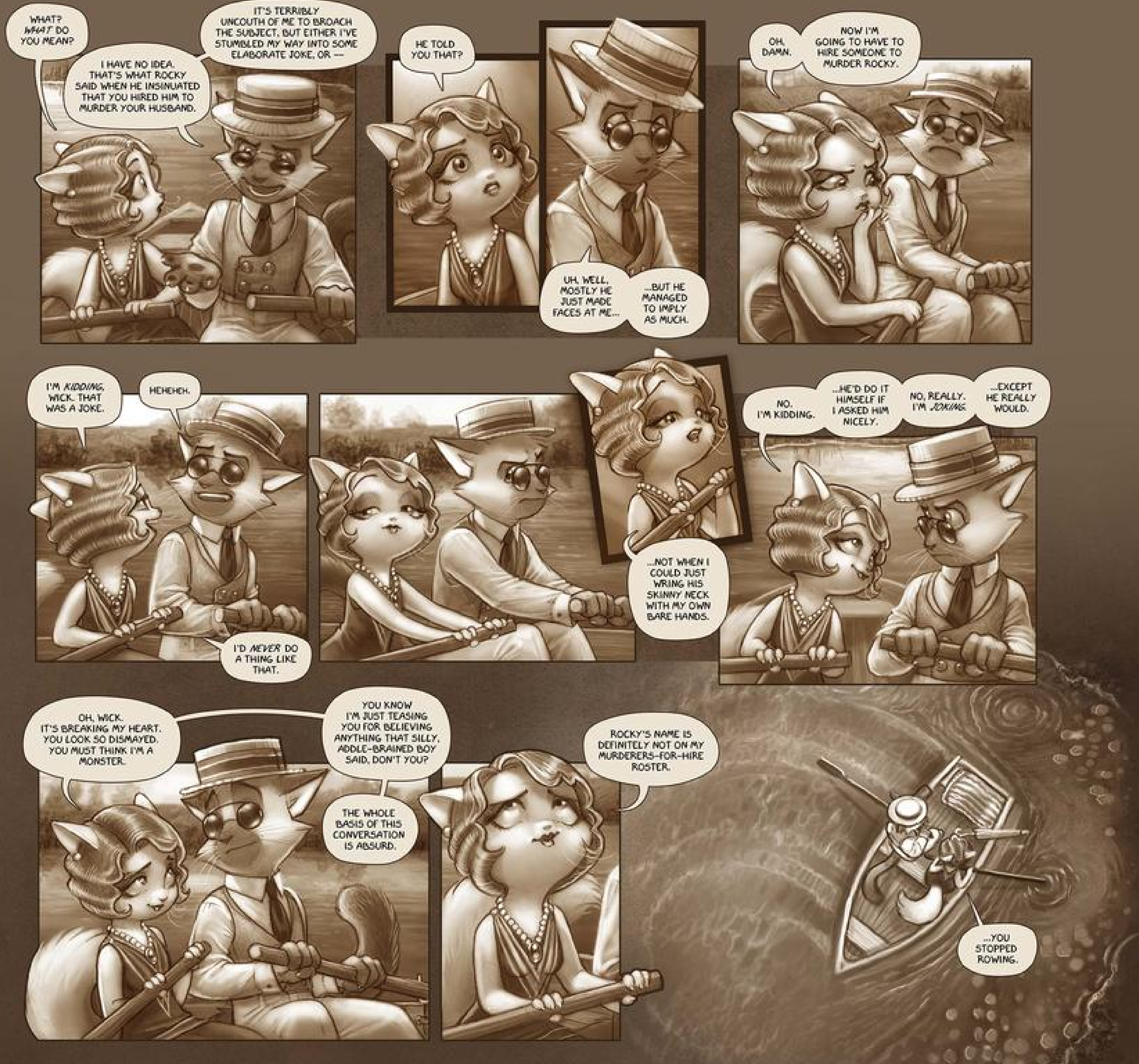

LACY!
COMING.
CAN YOU HELP ME FIND MY READING GLASSES? I CAN'T SEE A DAMN THING I'M TRYING TO WRITE.
I FOUND THEM, MR. SABLE.
WHERE?
ON YOUR FACE, MR. SABLE.
...OH.
SIGH WHY DOES BLASTING GIANT HOLES IN THE EARTH REQUIRE SO MUCH PAPERWORK?
UM... NO REST FOR THE WICKED, I SUPPOSE.
APPARENTLY NOT. I GOT IN VERY, VERY LATE LAST NIGHT, BUT THE OLD GRINDSTONE IS UNSYMPATHETIC.
I HAVE TO HAVE THIS NEW FINANCIAL PROSPECTUS SONG AND DANCE ROUTINE READY TO PERFORM FOR THE SHAREHOLDERS BEFORE THE START OF THE WEEK.
...SO THANKS FOR BEING HERE ON WHAT'S TRADITIONALLY A DAY OFF FOR THE NOT-SO-WICKED.
MMHMM.
HERE'S YOUR COFFEE. TRY TO SAVOR THIS ONE. I DO HAVE *OTHER* WORK TO DO.

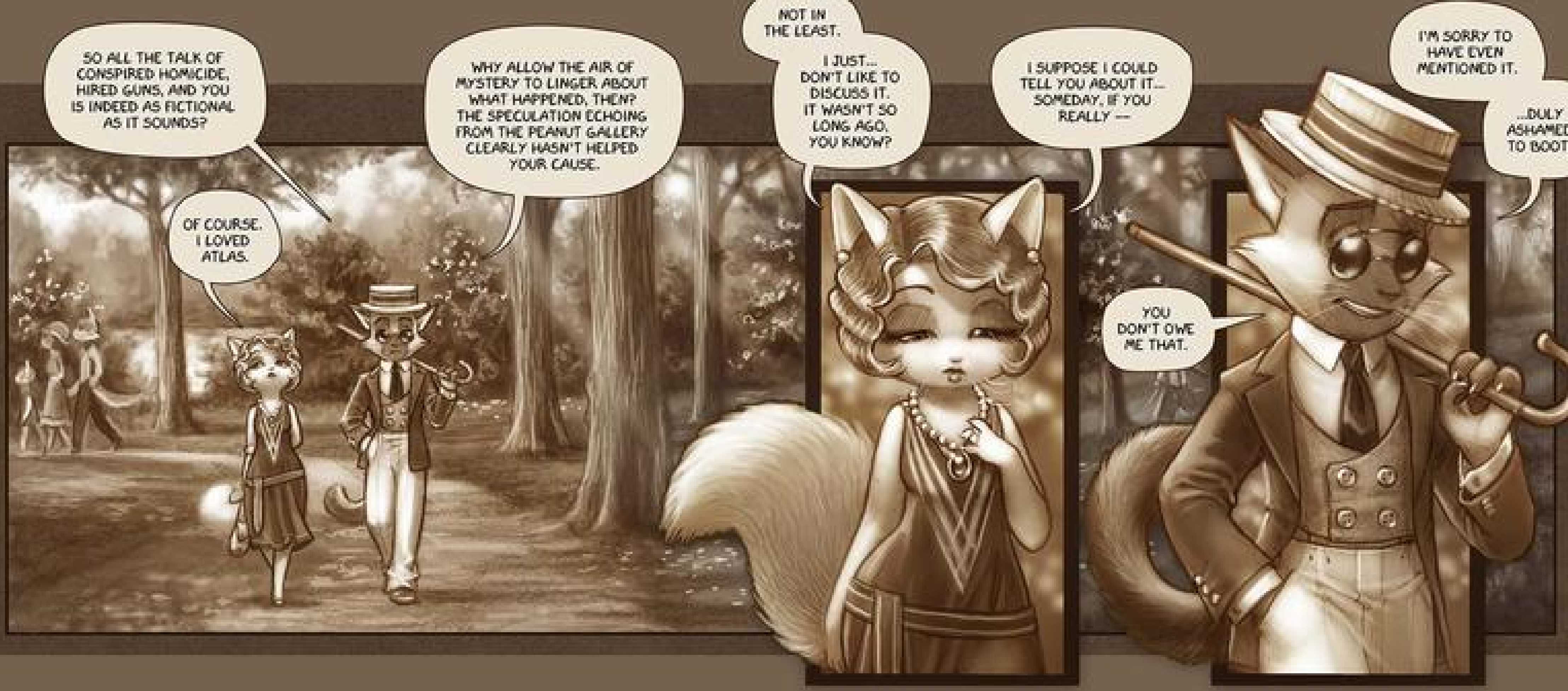

AND I'M NOT BRINGING ANY MORE IF I CATCH YOU POURING GIGGLE WATER IN IT.
I WOULD NEVER.
...LET YOU CATCH ME.
WERE YOU EXPECTING SOMEONE?
THERE WASN'T ANYTHING IN THE SCHEDULE BOOK...
...AND YOU LOOK A MESS.
I AGREED TO MEET WITH SOMEONE. LAST-MINUTE PLANS...
I ALMOST FORGOT.
YOU HAVE TIME FOR LAST-MINUTE PLANS?
OF COURSE NOT... BUT STALL HER AT THE DOOR, WOULD YOU?
YOU'RE AMONG THE HOUSE STAFF, THEN?
OH, NO. I WORK AT THE OFFICE, USUALLY. I'M MR. SABLE'S PERSONAL SECRETARY. I'M JUST HERE HELPING HIM CATCH UP TODAY.
I DON'T THINK HE'S FINDING MUCH TIME FOR SLEEP LATELY.
I'LL TRY NOT TO KEEP HIM LONG, IN THAT CASE.
HELLO!
OH, I DIDN'T REALIZE WE HAD THE WHOLE RETINUE HERE.
THE BOYS WERE *JUST* LEAVING, ACTUALLY.
ROCKY...
WELL, GOOD TO SEE YOU, ROCKY, HOWEVER BRIEF.
...AND I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE BEEN INTRODUCED.
AH, GREAT! I'LL HAVE TO SHOW YOU MY COLLECTION SOMETIME!
HOW RUDE OF ME. THIS IS... FRECKLE. MY NEW... UH, WELL, HE LIKES GUNS.
PBBBT. ...SHOW YOU OUR COLLECTION SOMETIME...

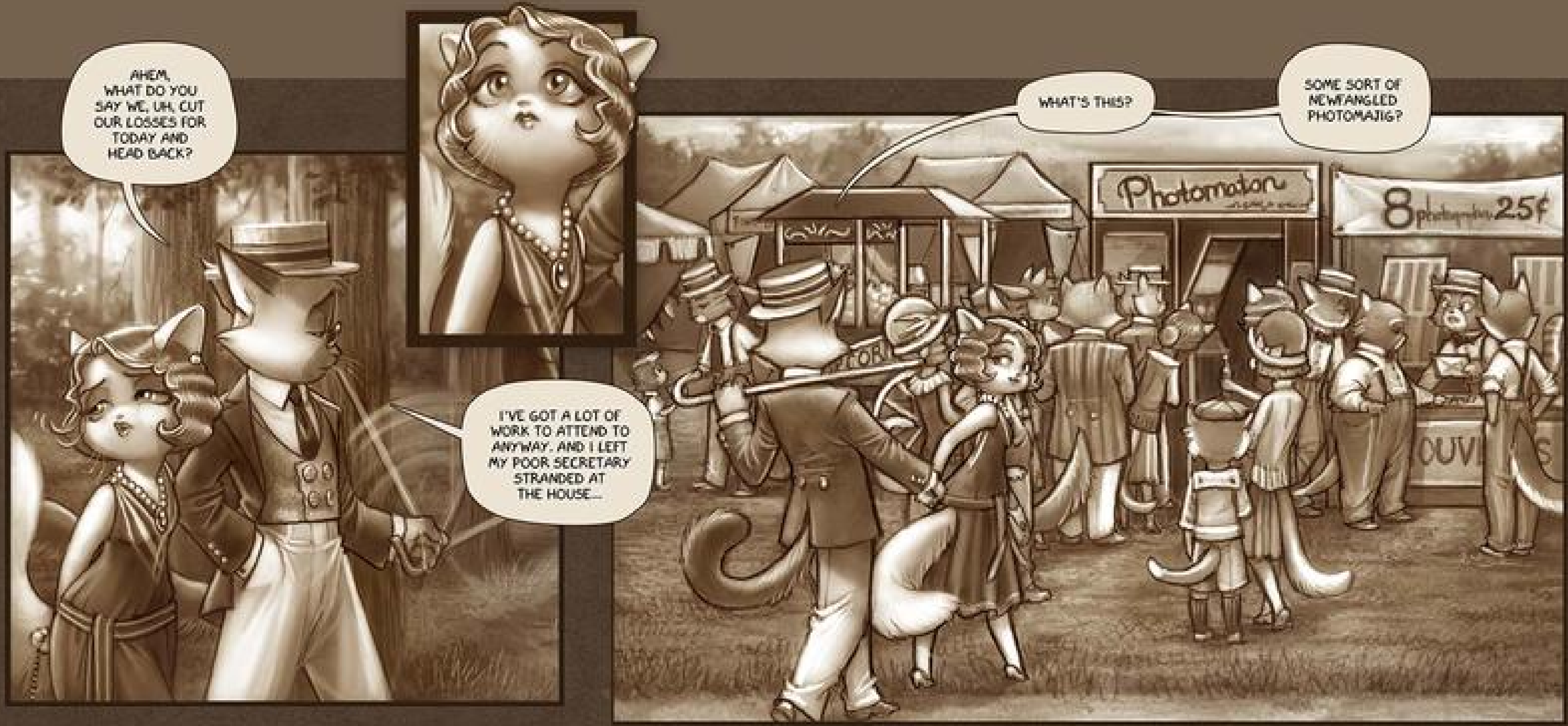

TOO SUNNY FOR YOU, WICK?
NO, IN FACT I THOUGHT WE MIGHT INDULGE IN THE SUN A BIT OVER AT FOREST PARK. IT'S A HOLIDAY WEEKEND – THERE OUGHT TO BE SOMETHING GOING ON.
IF YOU'LL JUST WAIT HERE IN THE FOYER, I'LL BRING THE ROADSTER AROUND.
WICK, I FOUND YOUR TIRE IRON!
WH-AAAAUUGHHH
OH, THANK YOU.
YOU'RE AWFULLY JUMPY, WICK.
I DRINK A LOT OF COFFEE.
IS THERE SOMETHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH ...ROCKY?
OH, NO. I'M HERE TO HELP *YOU!* WICK.
YOU SEEM LIKE A WELL-INTENTIONED SORT.
LAST NIGHT'S WHITE KNIGHT, RIGHT? HAHA.
SO, I THOUGHT IT'D ONLY BE RIGHT TO WARN YOU – YOU'RE WANDERING INTO DEADLY TERRITORY.
MITZI'S A DANGEROUS LADY, WICK.
I HAVE IT FROM A GOOD SOURCE THAT SHE'S A BEARTRAP!
WHAT?
YEAH. IN A BUNNY BOX, SEE?
NO. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
MAYBE YOU SHOULD ASK HER HUSBAND, WICK.
...WAIT.
YOU CAN'T.
HE'S DEAD!
Q.E.D.


ARE YOU TRYING TO SELL ME ON THOSE NONSENSICAL RUMORS THAT SHE KILLED HER HUSBAND?
I'VE KNOWN HER A WHILE, ROCKY. WHETHER OUT OF CLASS OR KINDNESS, SHE WOULDN'T HARM A FLY.
WELL, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO.
NOT DIRECTLY.
NOT WHEN SHE'S GOT CERTAIN... FAITHFUL OPERATIVES AT HER DISPOSAL.
HEH. WHAT ARE YOU INSINUATING?
...WHAT? YOU MEAN YOU...?
UHH.
HA-HA
HAHAHA
...OH. HA HA HA HA.
RIGHT. YOU'RE, UH... QUITE THE JOKER, ROCKY.
WELL, I BEST BE OFF, WICK!
TIME TO GO RISK MY NECK PROCURING SOME QUALITY INTOXICANTS FOR YOU TO DROWN IN!
SEE YOU AGAIN SOON!
HAVE FUN, OLD SPORT!


LET'S TALK BUSINESS, WICK.
I REALIZED MY APPROACH LAST NIGHT WAS ALL WRONG.
IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF CAPITAL.
I HAVE AN IDEAL ALLY IN YOU. *YOU* SPECIFICALLY.
YOU'VE BEEN LOYAL, ABOVE AND BEYOND.
YOU KNOW ALL THE MUCKETY-MUCKS THIS CITY HAS TO OFFER...
AND YOU'RE AN OLD PRO AT PULLING A BUSINESS UP BY THE BOOTSTRAPS.
SLIDE OVER, HONEY.
I'M NOT OLD.
WELL, JUST OLD ENOUGH TO LOOK DISTINGUISHED.
I LIKE YOUR FACE. DID I FORGET TO MENTION THAT ONE? NOT QUITE A BARRYMORE, BUT CLOSE ENOUGH.
WHAT I'M GETTING AT, WICK, IS THAT I'D LIKE YOU TO BE MY BUSINESS PARTNER.
FORTY PERCENT.
HMM? WHY SO QUIET?
YOU LOST INTEREST OVERNIGHT?
UH, NO... I APOLOGIZE. IT'S JUST THAT IT'S A LOT TO CONSIDER...
AND I'M A LITTLE TIRED.
AWW.
NOT HITTING ON ALL SIXES TODAY, I'M AFRAID.
POOR BUNNY.
...WHAT BUNNY? LIKE IN A BOX?
I MEAN... JUST WHAT KIND OF BUNNY DO YOU TAKE ME FOR, MADAM?


WHAT? *WHAT* DO YOU MEAN?
I HAVE NO IDEA. THAT'S WHAT ROCKY SAID WHEN HE INSINUATED THAT YOU HIRED HIM TO MURDER YOUR HUSBAND.
IT'S TERRIBLY UNCOUTH OF ME TO BROACH THE SUBJECT, BUT EITHER I'VE STUMBLED MY WAY INTO SOME ELABORATE JOKE, OR —
HE TOLD YOU THAT?
UH, WELL, MOSTLY HE JUST MADE FACES AT ME...
...BUT HE MANAGED TO IMPLY AS MUCH.
OH, DAMN.
NOW I'M GOING TO HAVE TO HIRE SOMEONE TO MURDER ROCKY.
I'M *KIDDING*, WICK. THAT WAS A JOKE.
HEHEHEH.
I'D *NEVER* DO A THING LIKE THAT.
...NOT WHEN I COULD JUST WRING HIS SKINNY NECK WITH MY OWN BARE HANDS.
NO. I'M KIDDING.
...HE'D DO IT HIMSELF IF I ASKED HIM NICELY.
NO, REALLY. I'M *JOKING*.
...EXCEPT HE REALLY WOULD.
OH, WICK. IT'S BREAKING MY HEART. YOU LOOK SO DISMAYED. YOU MUST THINK I'M A MONSTER.
YOU KNOW I'M JUST TEASING YOU FOR BELIEVING ANYTHING THAT SILLY, ADDLE-BRAINED BOY SAID, DON'T YOU?
THE WHOLE BASIS OF THIS CONVERSATION IS ABSURD.
ROCKY'S NAME IS DEFINITELY NOT ON MY MURDERERS-FOR-HIRE ROSTER.
...YOU STOPPED ROWING.


SO ALL THE TALK OF CONSPIRED HOMICIDE, HIRED GUNS, AND YOU IS INDEED AS FICTIONAL AS IT SOUNDS?
OF COURSE. I LOVED ATLAS.
WHY ALLOW THE AIR OF MYSTERY TO LINGER ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, THEN? THE SPECULATION ECHOING FROM THE PEANUT GALLERY CLEARLY HASN'T HELPED YOUR CAUSE.
NOT IN THE LEAST.
I JUST... DON'T LIKE TO DISCUSS IT. IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO, YOU KNOW?
I SUPPOSE I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT IT... SOMEDAY, IF YOU REALLY —
I'M SORRY TO HAVE EVEN MENTIONED IT.
...DULY ASHAMED TO BOOT.
YOU DON'T OWE ME THAT.


AHEM, WHAT DO YOU SAY WE, UH, CUT OUR LOSSES FOR TODAY AND HEAD BACK?
I'VE GOT A LOT OF WORK TO ATTEND TO ANYWAY. AND I LEFT MY POOR SECRETARY STRANDED AT THE HOUSE...
WHAT'S THIS?
SOME SORT OF NEWFANGLED PHOTOMAJIG?
Photomaton
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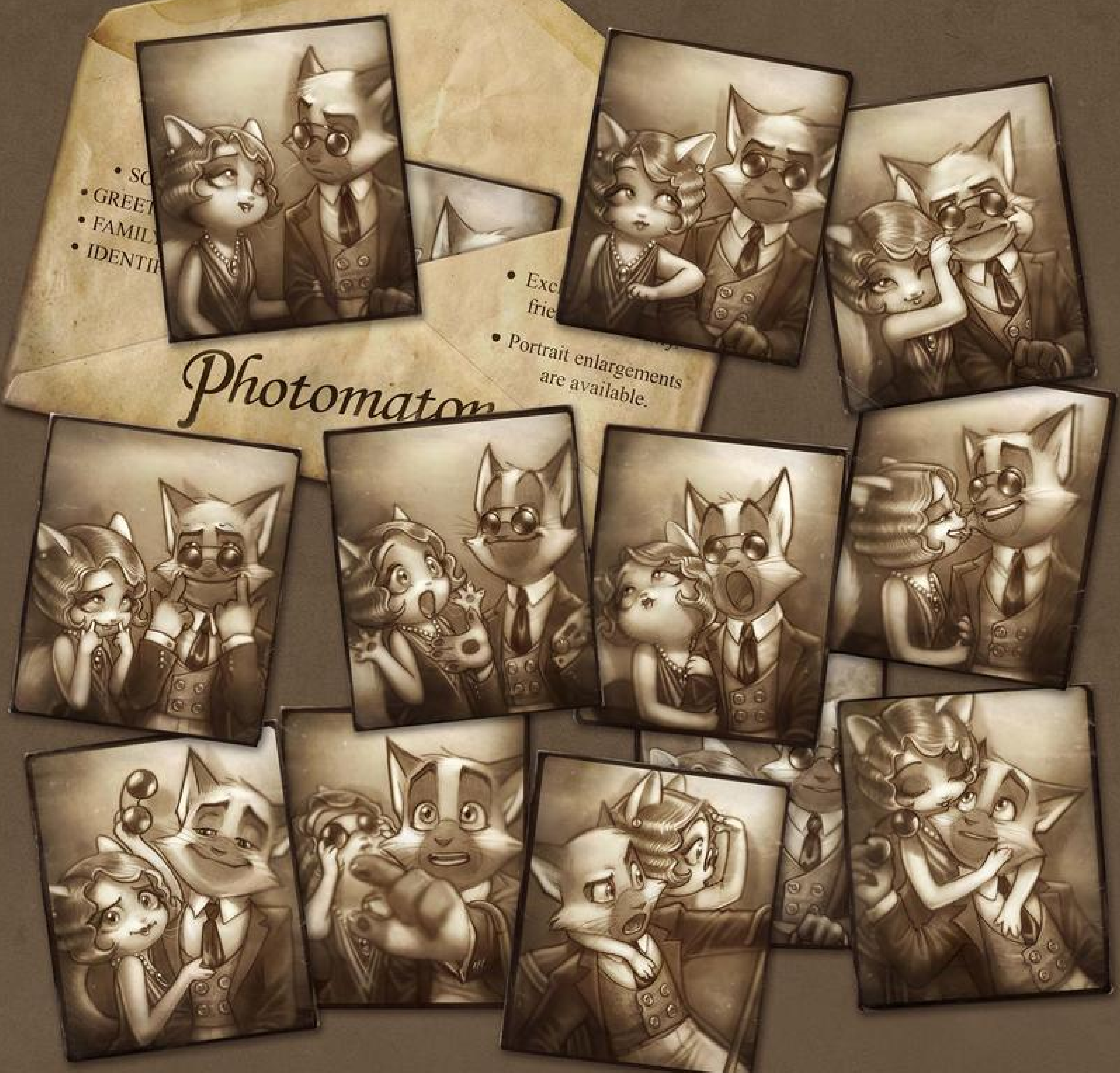
• SO
• GREET
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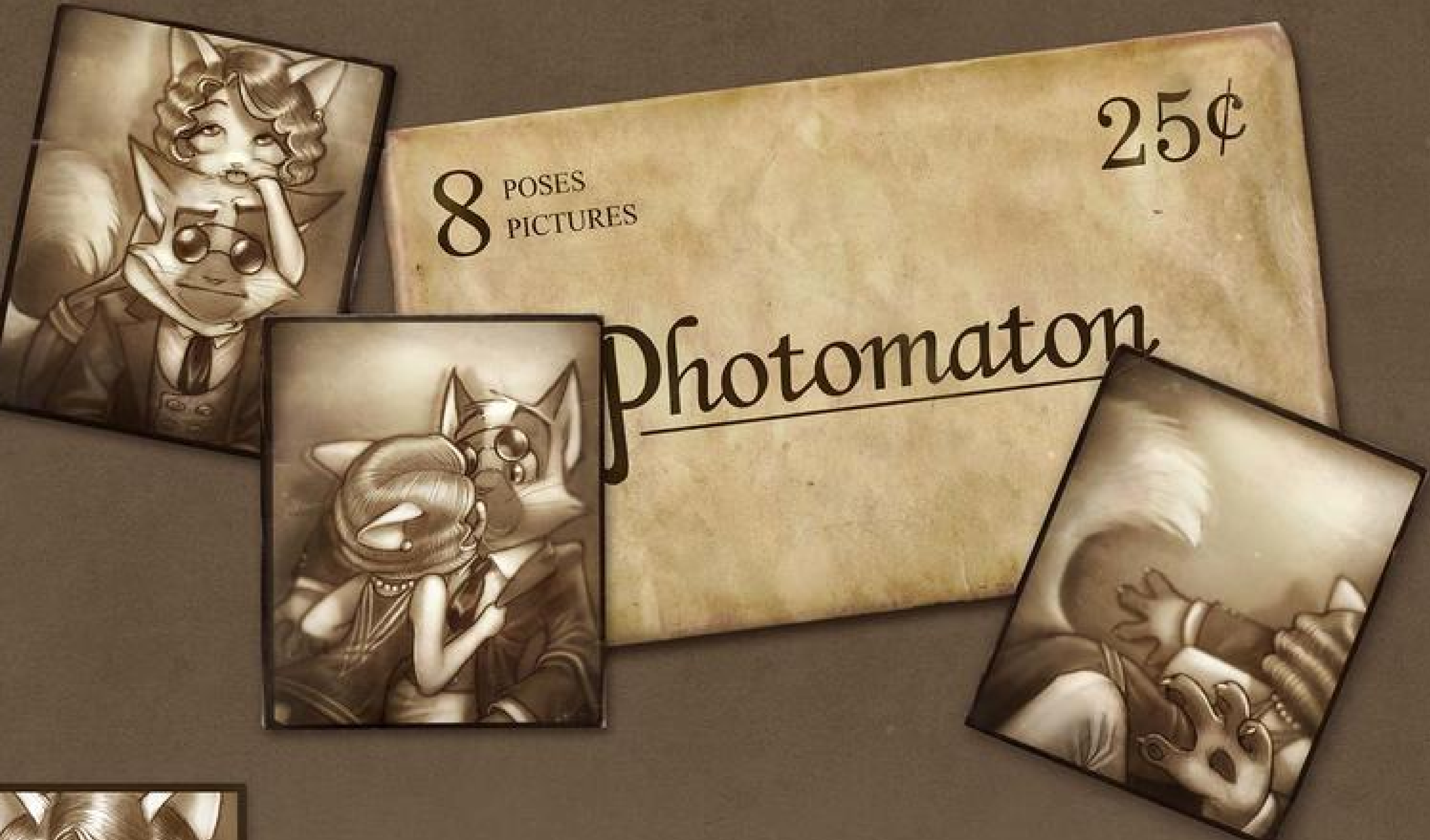
• Portrait enlargements are available.
Photomaton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8 POSES
PICTURES
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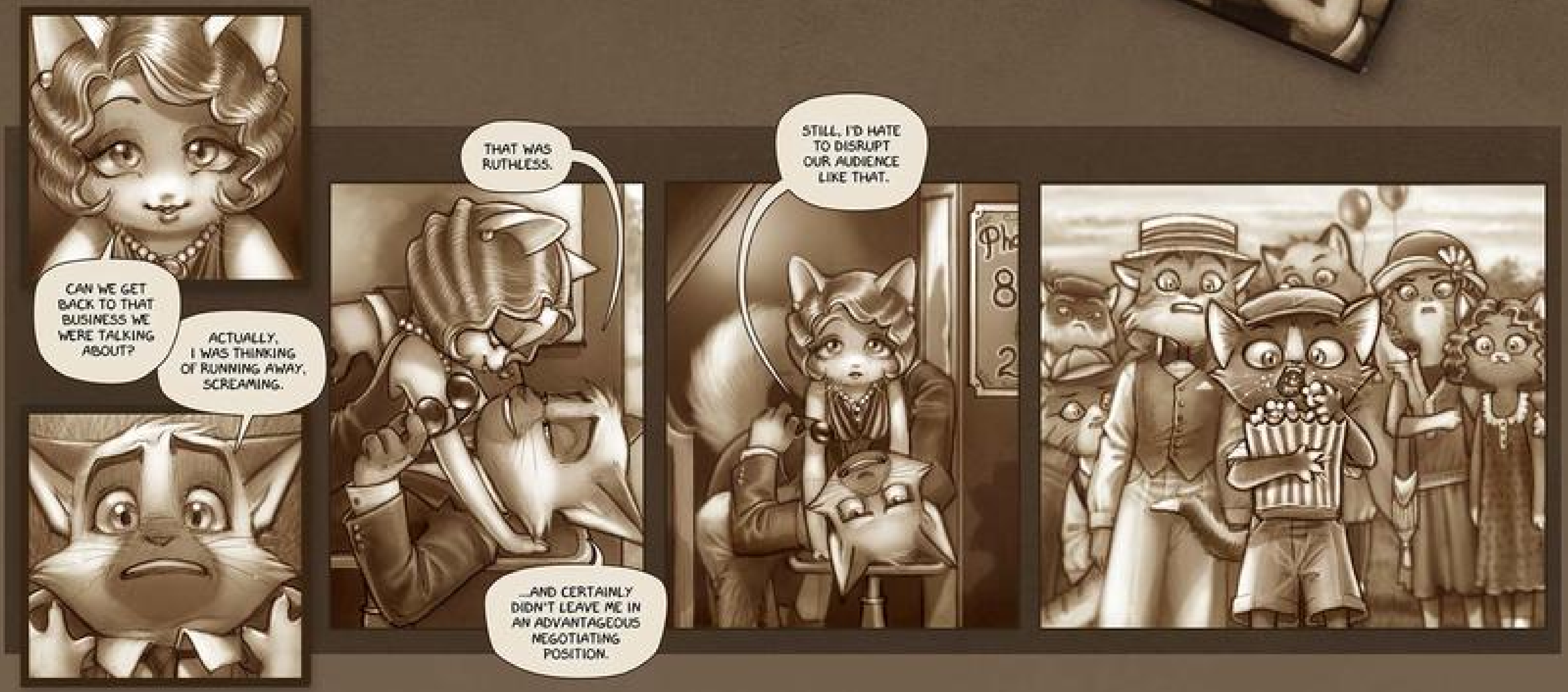
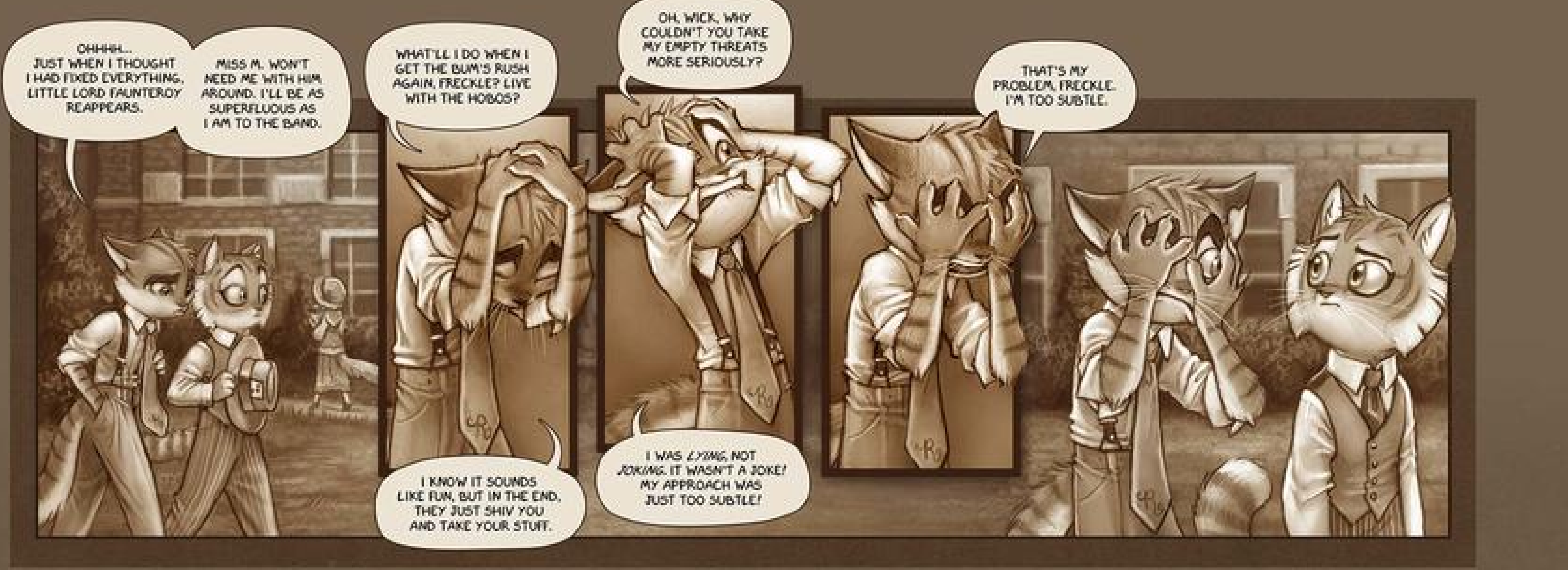
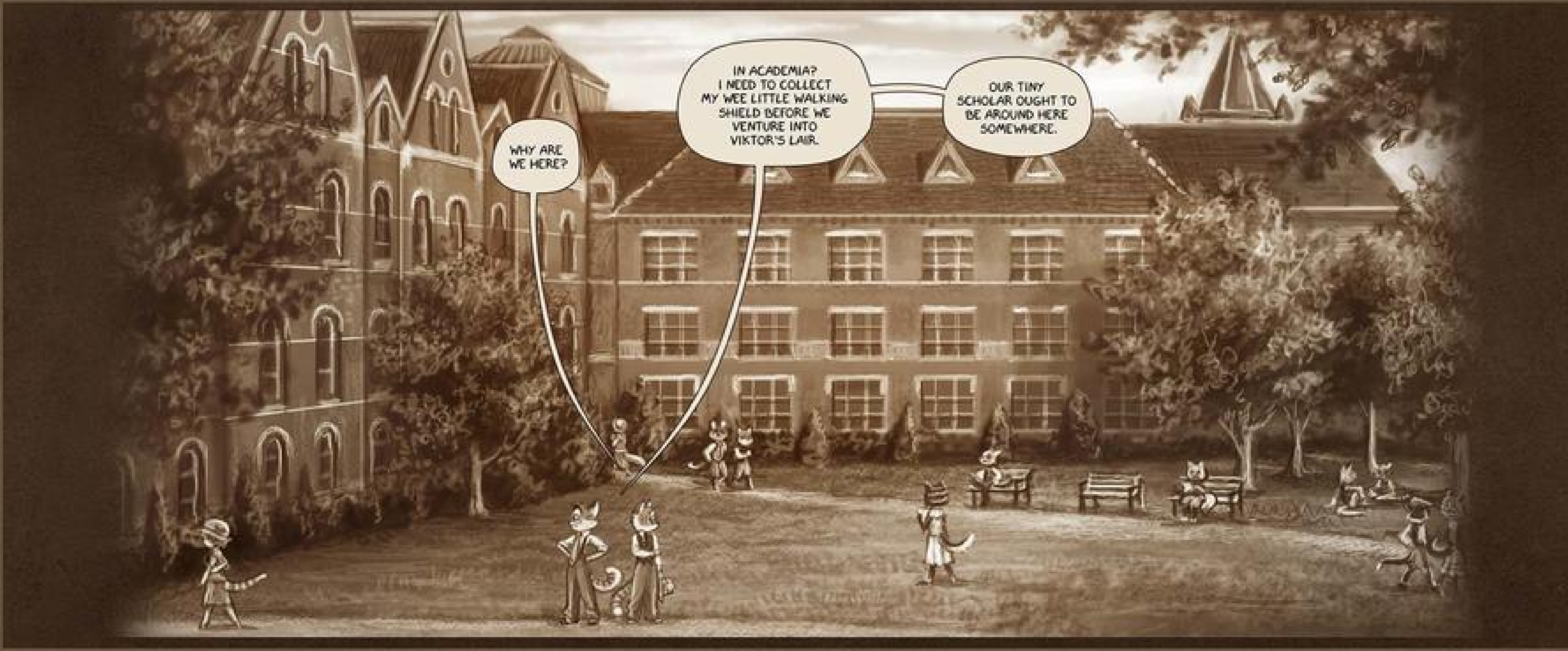
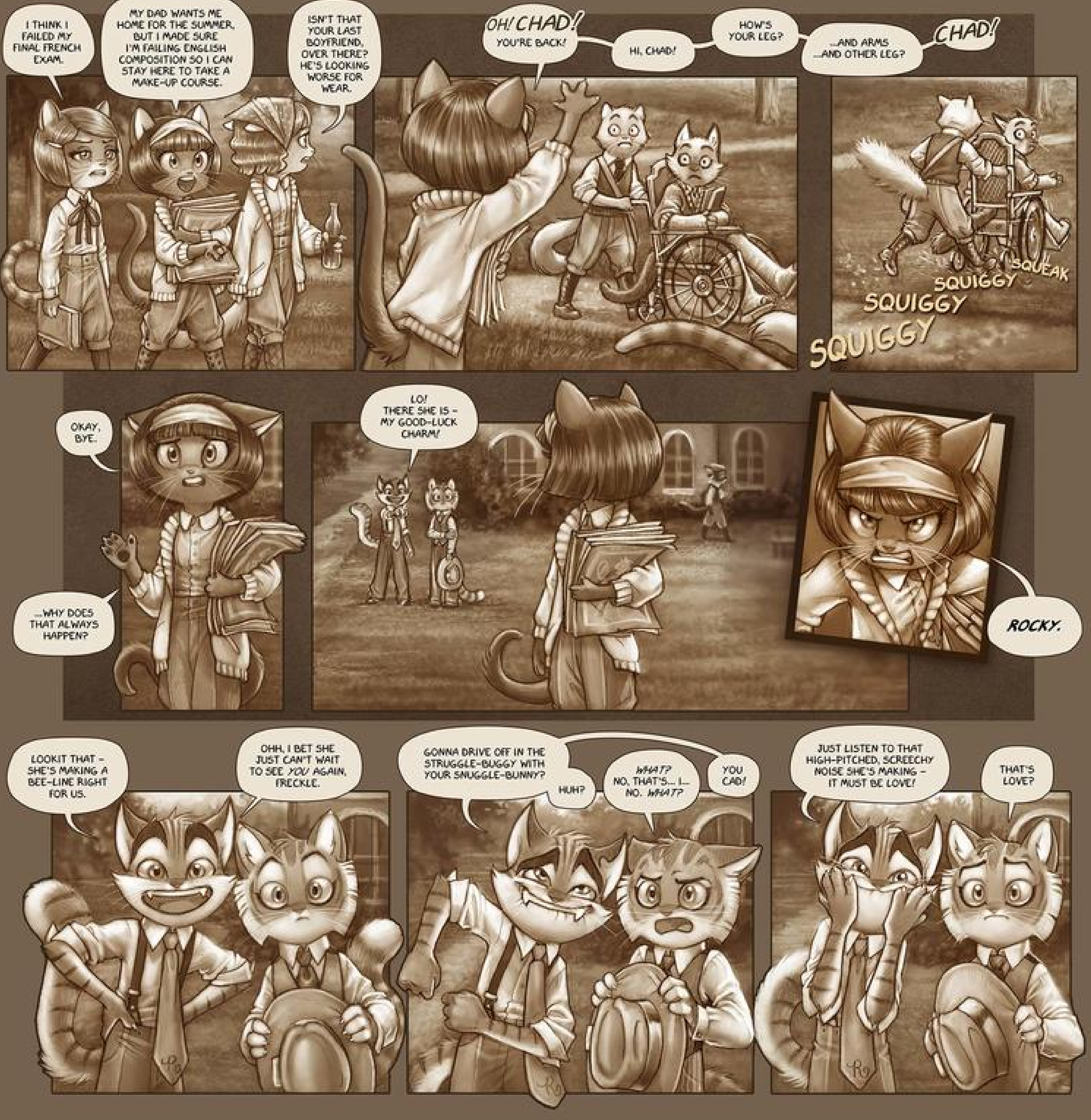
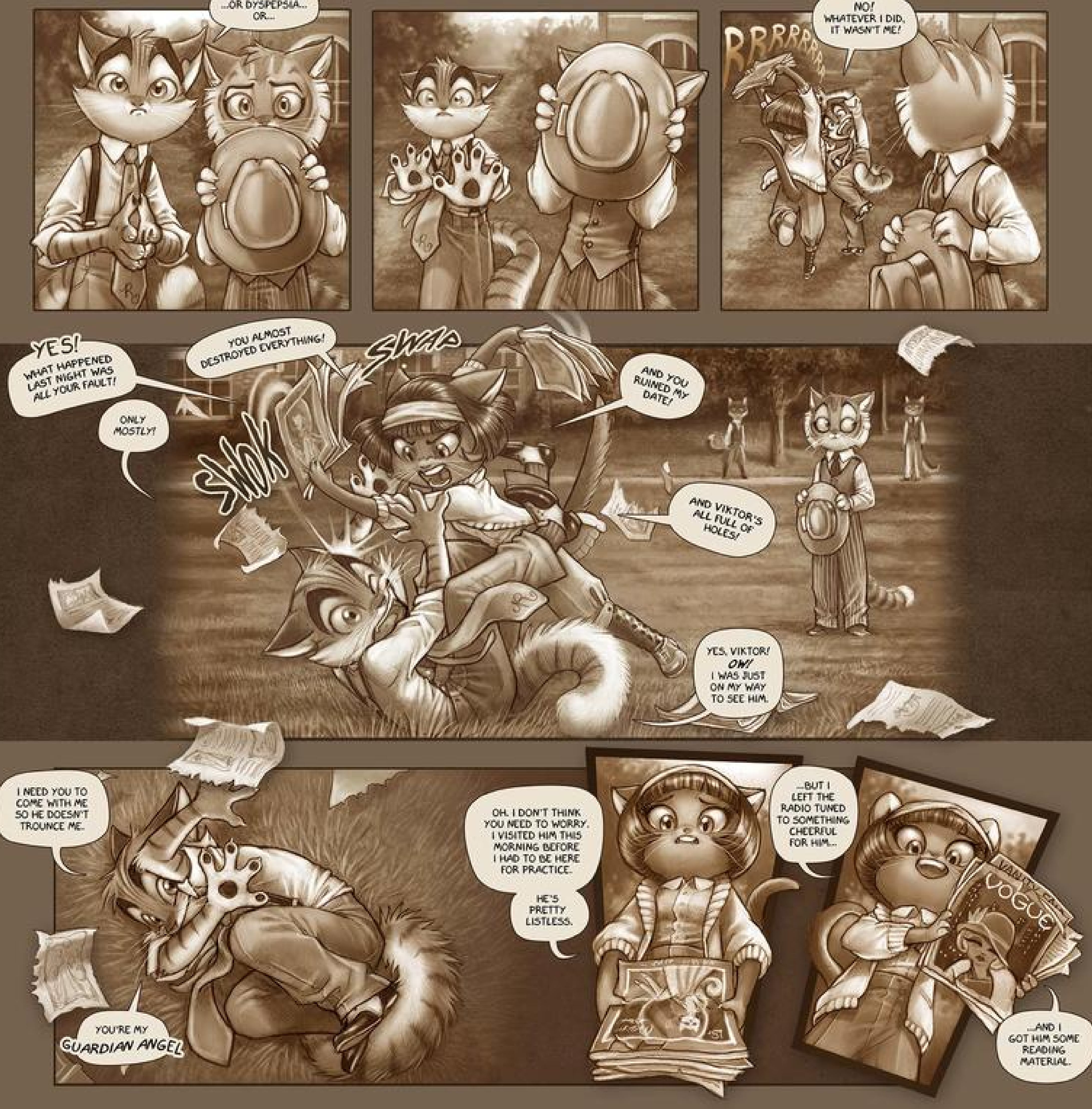
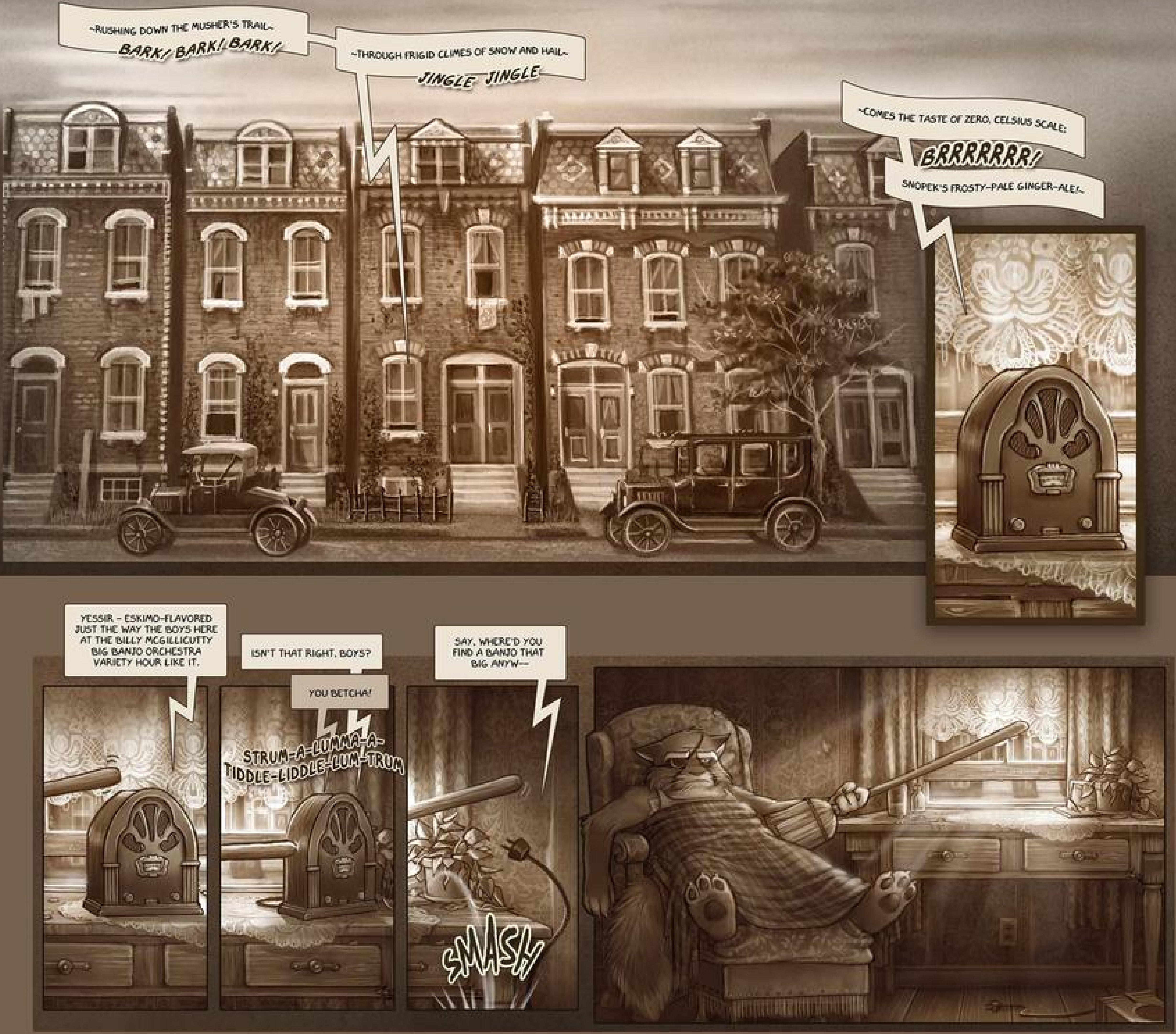

CAN WE GET BACK TO THAT BUSINESS WE WERE TALKING ABOUT?
ACTUALLY, I WAS THINKING OF RUNNING AWAY, SCREAMING.
THAT WAS RUTHLESS.
...AND CERTAINLY DIDN'T LEAVE ME IN AN ADVANTAGEOUS NEGOTIATING POSITION.
STILL, I'D HATE TO DISRUPT OUR AUDIENCE LIKE THAT.
Pho
8
2

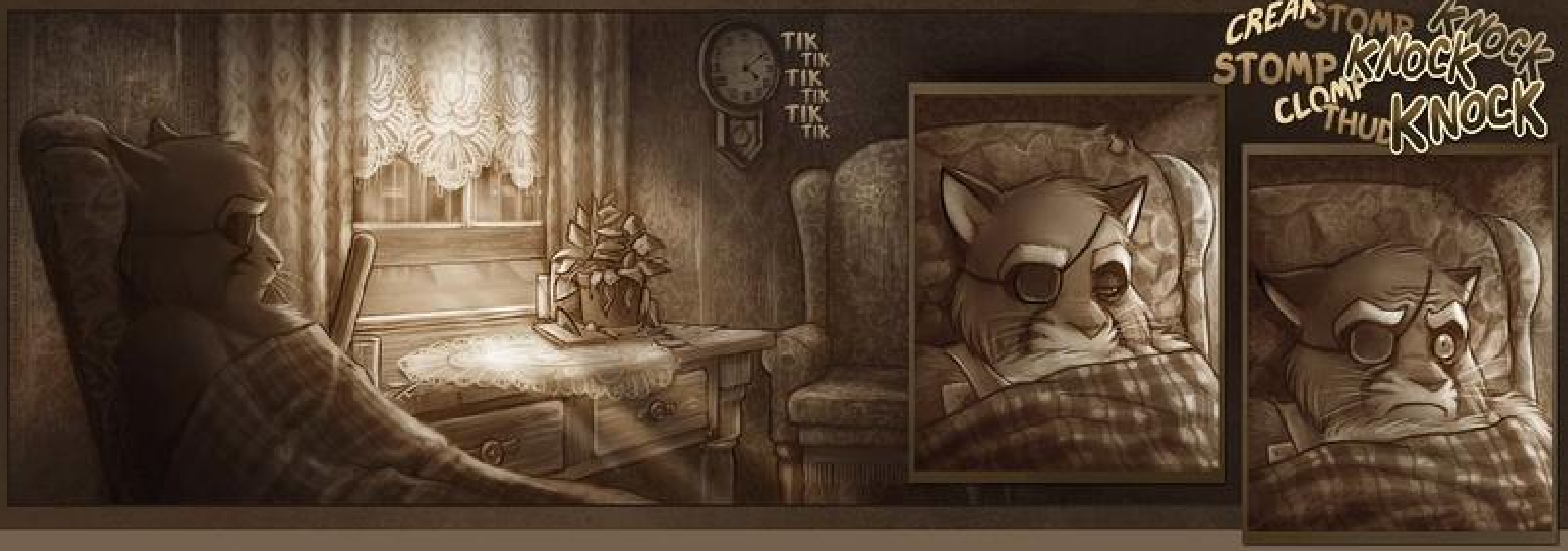

OHHHH... JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I HAD FIXED EVERYTHING, LITTLE LORD FAUNTEROY REAPPEARS.
MISS M. WON'T NEED ME WITH HIM AROUND. I'LL BE AS SUPERFLUOUS AS I AM TO THE BAND.
WHAT'LL I DO WHEN I GET THE BUM'S RUSH AGAIN, FRECKLE? LIVE WITH THE HOBOS?
I KNOW IT SOUNDS LIKE FUN, BUT IN THE END, THEY JUST SHIV YOU AND TAKE YOUR STUFF.
OH, WICK, WHY COULDN'T YOU TAKE MY EMPTY THREATS MORE SERIOUSLY?
I WAS *LYING*, NOT *JOKING*. IT WASN'T A JOKE! MY APPROACH WAS JUST TOO SUBTLE!
THAT'S MY PROBLEM, FRECKLE. I'M TOO SUBTLE.

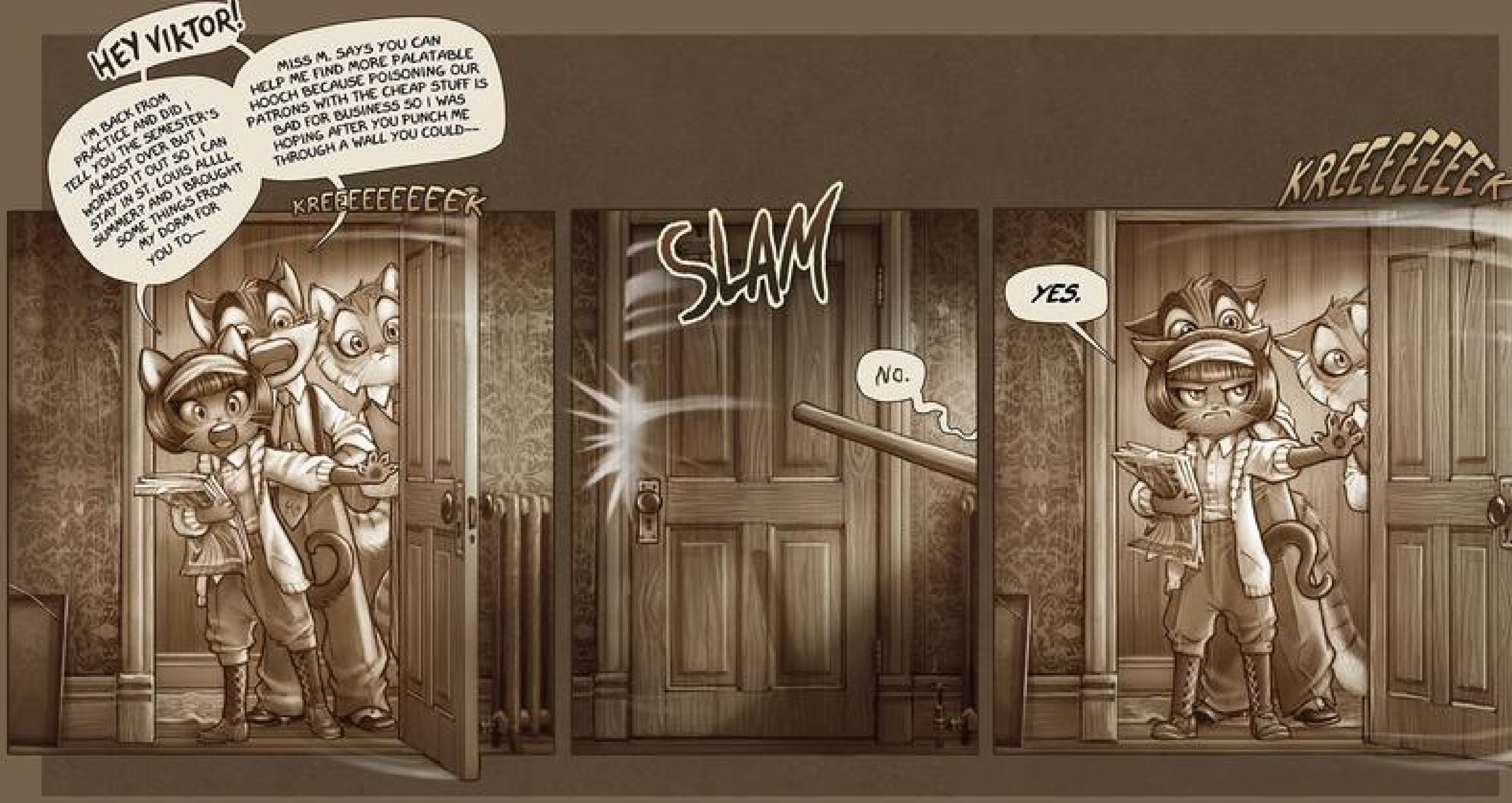

WHY ARE WE HERE?
IN ACADEMIA? I NEED TO COLLECT MY WEE LITTLE WALKING SHIELD BEFORE WE VENTURE INTO VIKTOR'S LAIR.
OUR TINY SCHOLAR OUGHT TO BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE.

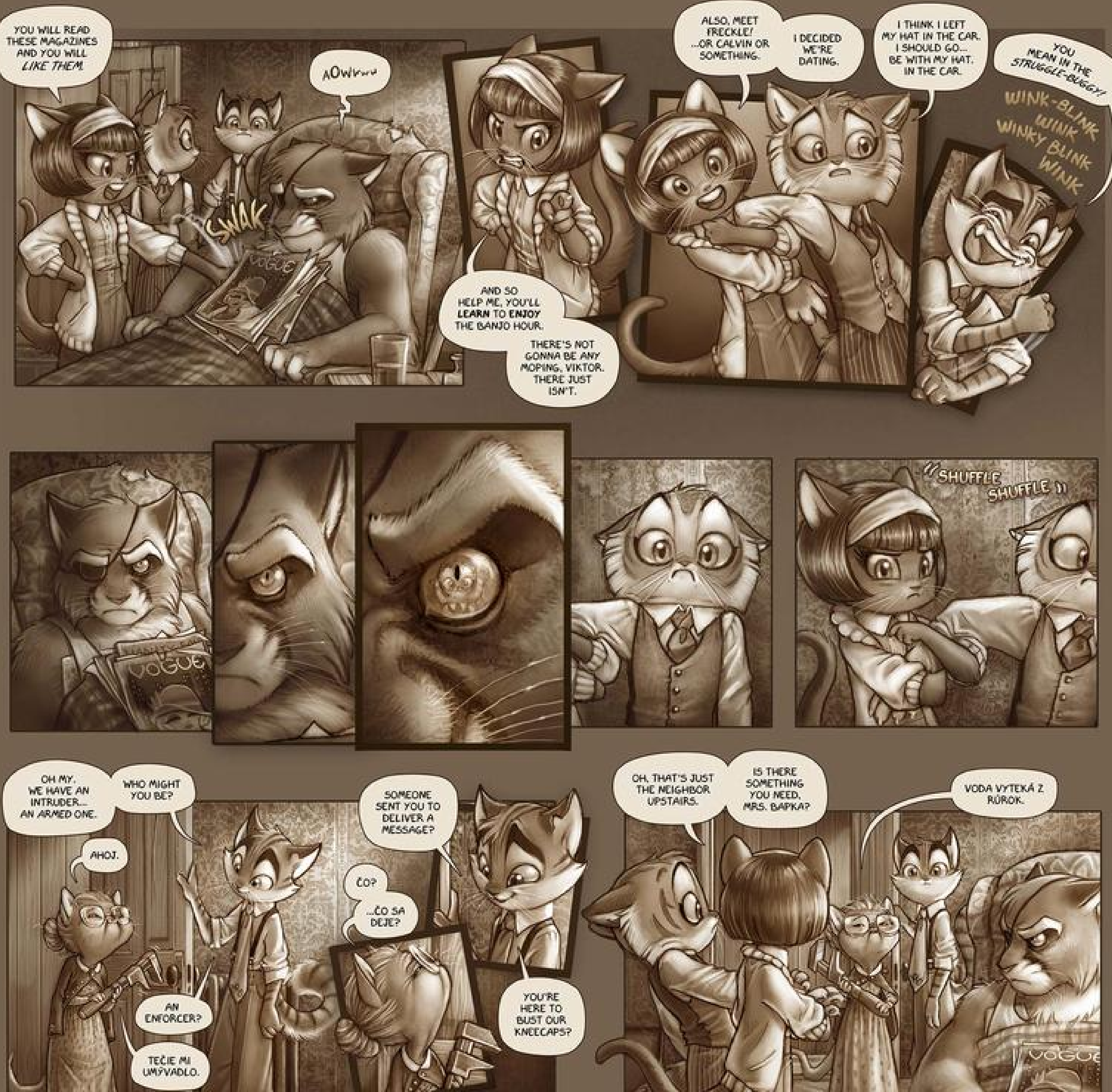

I THINK I FAILED MY FINAL FRENCH EXAM.
MY DAD WANTS ME HOME FOR THE SUMMER, BUT I MADE SURE I'M FAILING ENGLISH COMPOSITION SO I CAN STAY HERE TO TAKE A MAKE-UP COURSE.
ISN'T THAT YOUR LAST BOYFRIEND, OVER THERE? HE'S LOOKING WORSE FOR WEAR.
OH! CHAD! YOU'RE BACK!
HI, CHAD!
HOW'S YOUR LEG?
...AND ARMS ...AND OTHER LEG?
CHAD!
SQUIGGY
SQUIGGY
SQUIGGY
SQUEAK
OKAY, BYE.
...WHY DOES THAT ALWAYS HAPPEN?
LO! THERE SHE IS – MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM!
ROCKY.
LOOKIT THAT – SHE'S MAKING A BEE-LINE RIGHT FOR US.
OHH, I BET SHE JUST CAN'T WAIT TO SEE *YOU* AGAIN, FRECKLE.
GONNA DRIVE OFF IN THE STRUGGLE-BUGGY WITH YOUR SNUGGLE-BUNNY?
HUH?
WHAT? NO, THAT'S... I... NO. *WHAT?*
YOU CAD!
JUST LISTEN TO THAT HIGH-PITCHED, SCREECHY NOISE SHE'S MAKING – IT MUST BE LOVE!
THAT'S LOVE?

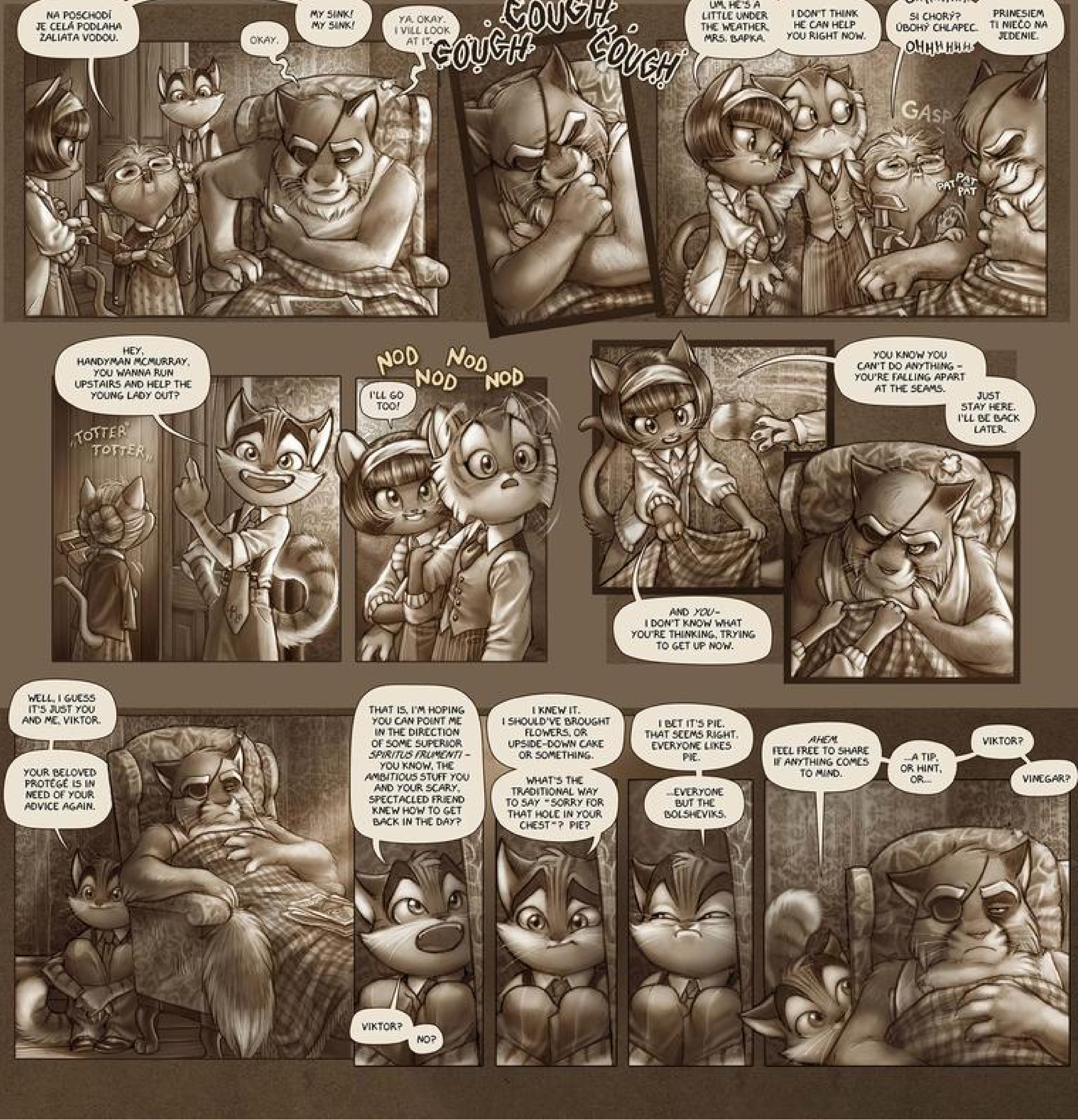

...OR DYSPEPSIA... OR...
RRRRRRR
NO! WHATEVER I DID, IT WASN'T ME!
YES! WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT WAS ALL YOUR FAULT!
ONLY MOSTLY?
YOU ALMOST DESTROYED EVERYTHING!
SWAP
AND YOU RUINED MY DATE!
SHOK
AND VIKTOR'S ALL FULL OF HOLES!
YES, VIKTOR! OW! I WAS JUST ON MY WAY TO SEE HIM.
I NEED YOU TO COME WITH ME SO HE DOESN'T TROUNCE ME.
YOU'RE MY GUARDIAN ANGEL
OH, I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO WORRY. I VISITED HIM THIS MORNING BEFORE I HAD TO BE HERE FOR PRACTICE.
HE'S PRETTY LISTLESS.
...BUT I LEFT THE RADIO TUNED TO SOMETHING CHEERFUL FOR HIM...
VANITY FAIR
VOGUE
...AND I GOT HIM SOME READING MATERIAL.

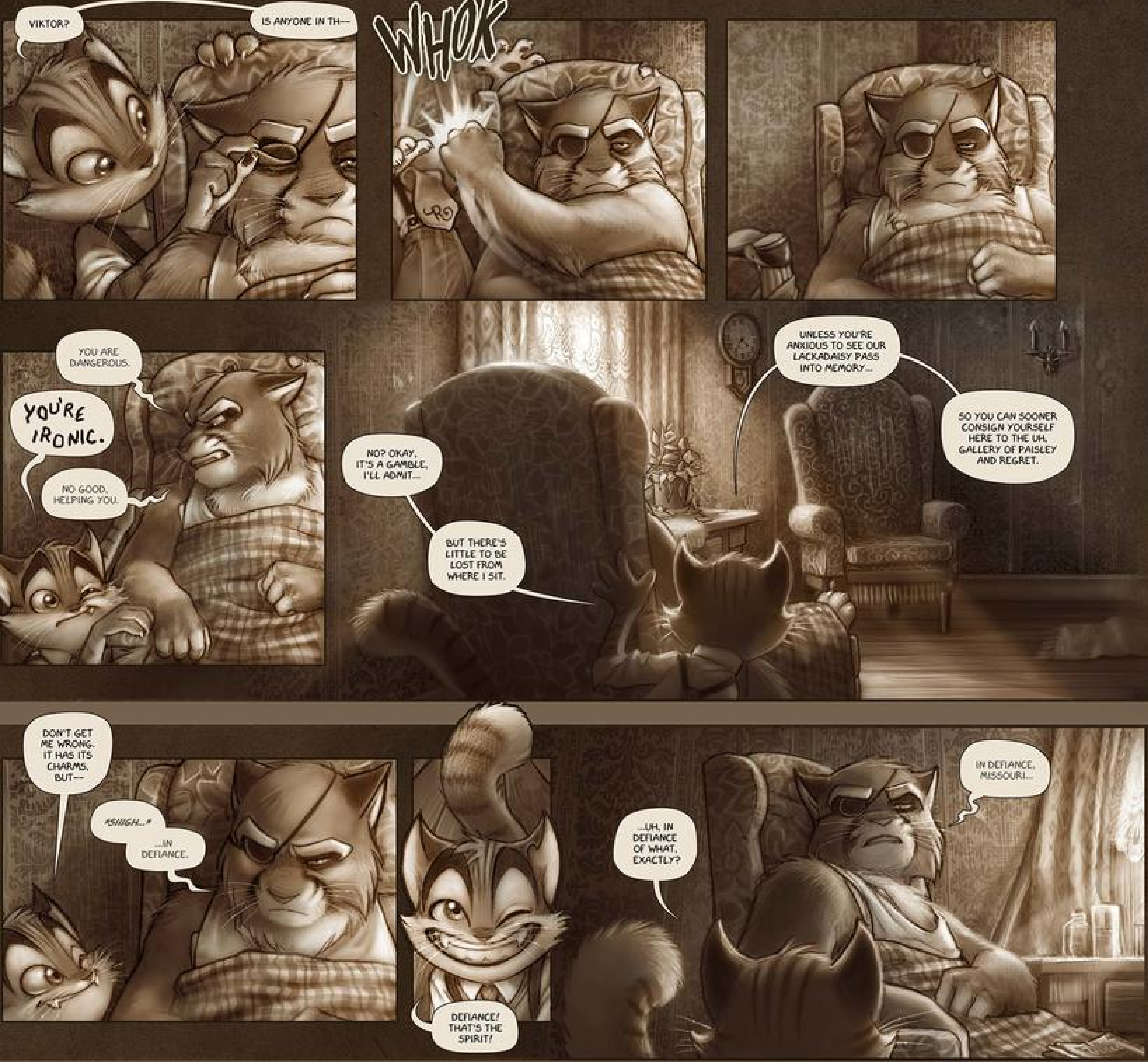

~RUSHING DOWN THE MUSHER'S TRAIL~
BARK! BARK! BARK!
~THROUGH FRIGID CLIMES OF SNOW AND HAIL~
JINGLE JINGLE
~COMES THE TASTE OF ZERO, CELSIUS SCALE:
BRRRRRRR!
SNOPEK'S FROSTY-PALE GINGER-ALE!~
YESSIR – ESKIMO-FLAVORED JUST THE WAY THE BOYS HERE AT THE BILLY McGILLICUTTY BIG BANJO ORCHESTRA VARIETY HOUR LIKE IT.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, BOYS?
YOU BETCHA!
STRUM-A-LUMMA-A-TIDDLE-LIDDLE-LUM-TRUM
SAY, WHERE'D YOU FIND A BANJO THAT BIG ANYW--
SMASH

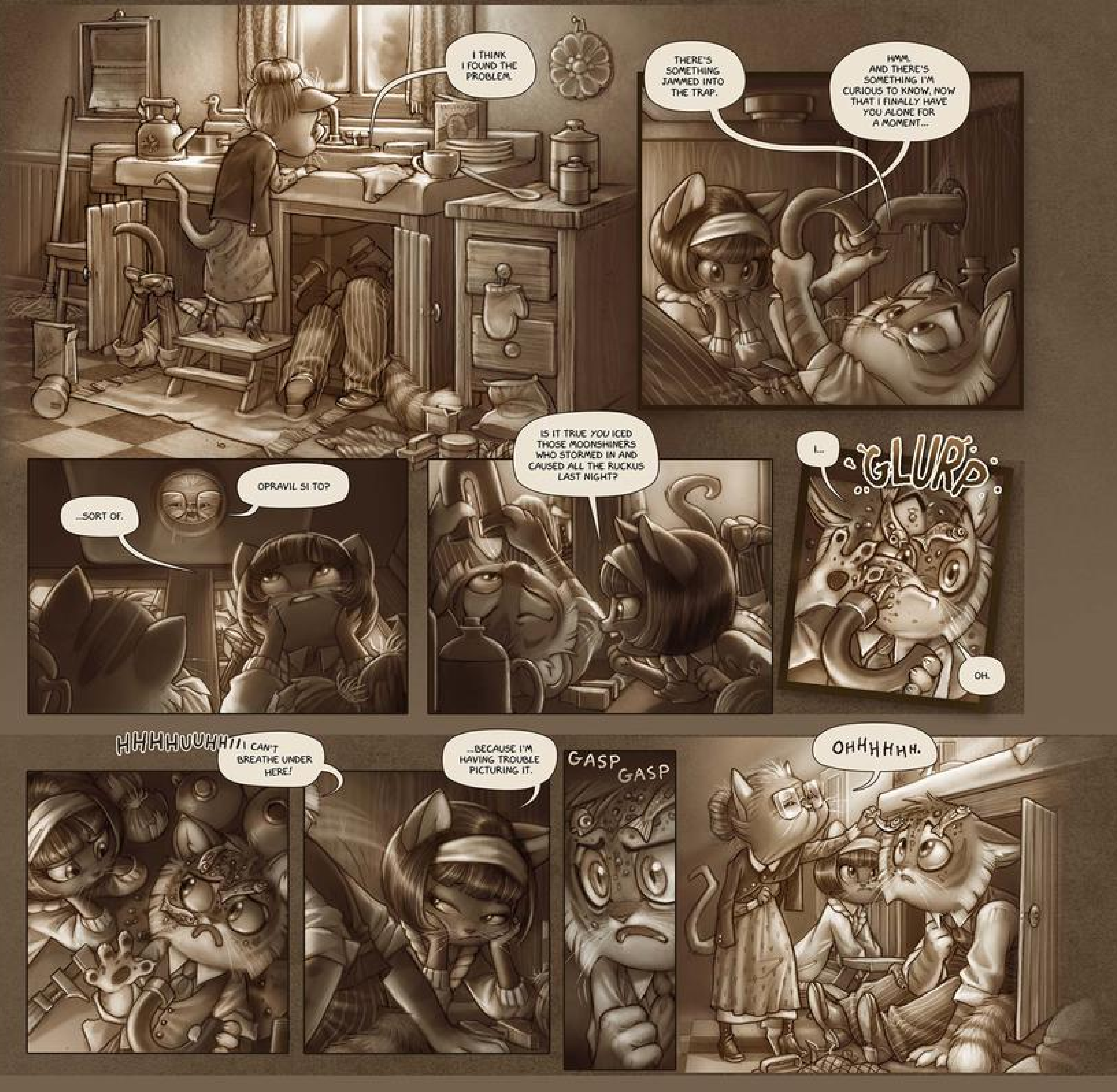

TIK TIK TIK TIK TIK TIK
CREAK
STOMP
KNOCK
STOMP
KNOCK
CLOMP
THUD
KNOCK

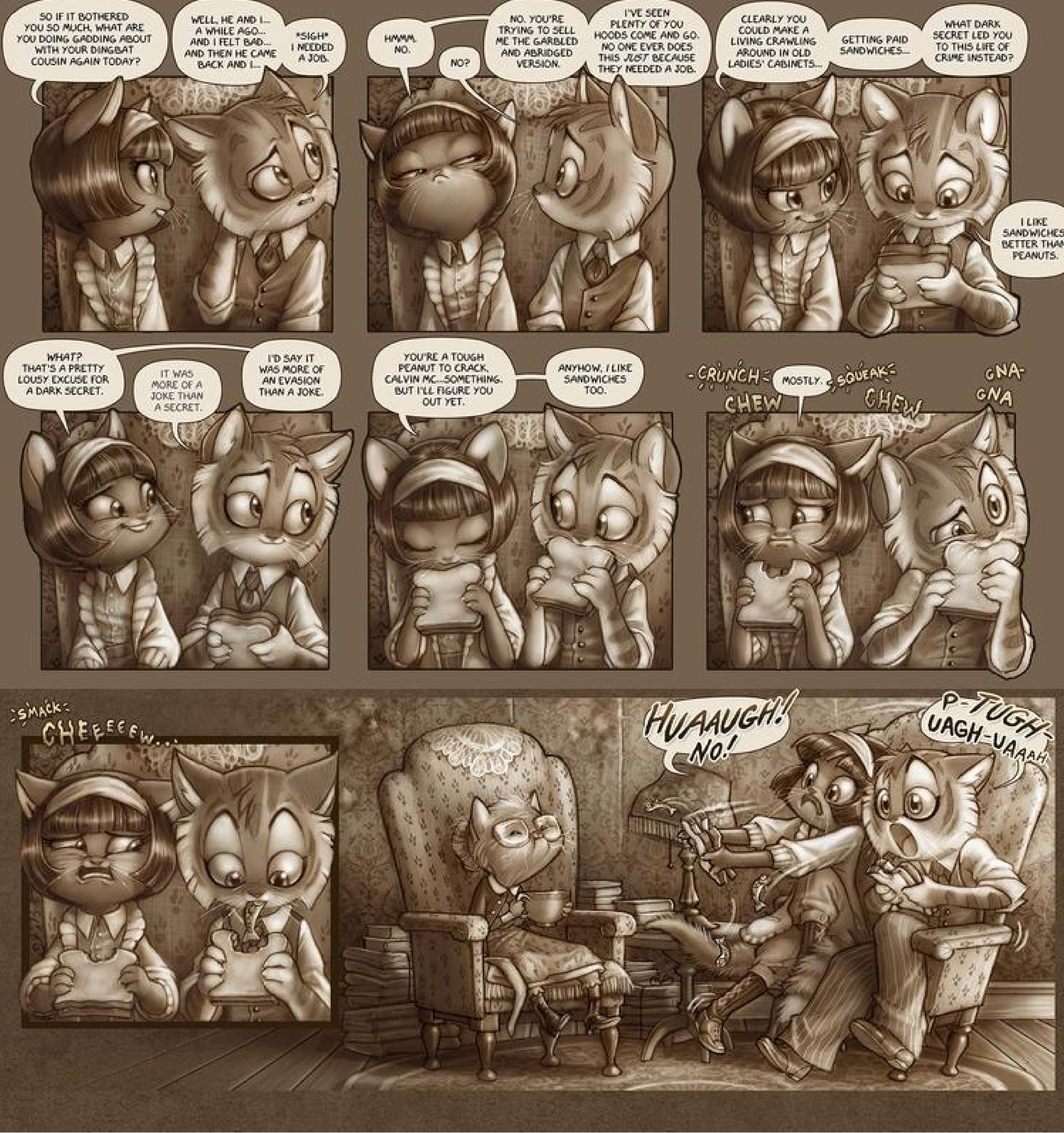

HEY VIKTOR!
I'M BACK FROM PRACTICE AND DID I TELL YOU THE SEMESTER'S ALMOST OVER BUT I WORKED IT OUT SO I CAN STAY IN ST. LOUIS ALLLL SUMMER? AND I BROUGHT SOME THINGS FROM MY DORM FOR YOU TO—
MISS M. SAYS YOU CAN HELP ME FIND MORE PALATABLE HOOCH BECAUSE POISONING OUR PATRONS WITH THE CHEAP STUFF IS BAD FOR BUSINESS SO I WAS HOPING AFTER YOU PUNCH ME THROUGH A WALL YOU COULD—
KREEEEEEEEEEK
SLAM
NO.
KREEEEEEEEEK
YES.

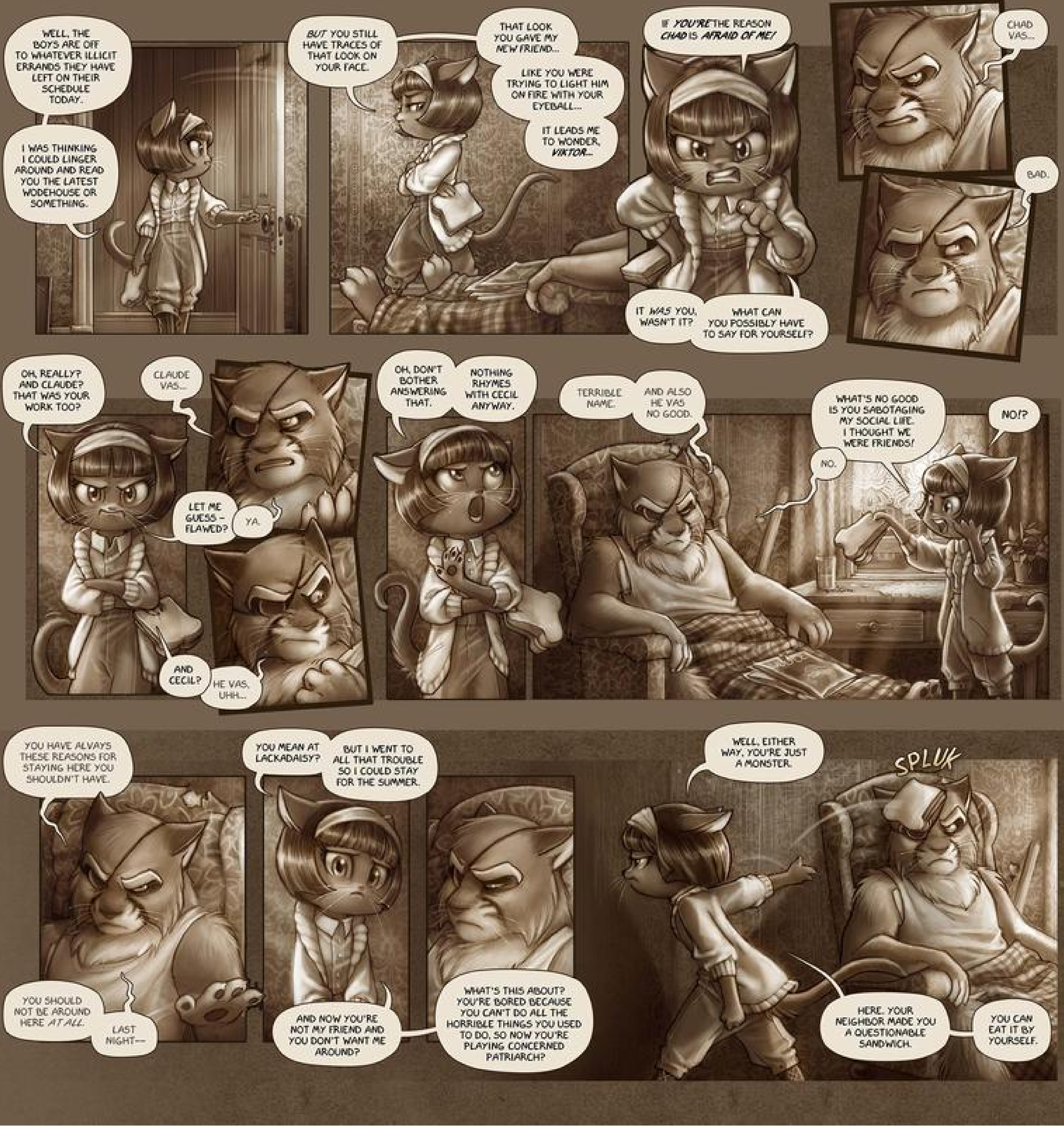

YOU WILL READ THESE MAGAZINES AND YOU WILL *LIKE THEM.*
SWAK
AOWrrr
VOGUE
AND SO HELP ME, YOU'LL **LEARN** TO **ENJOY** THE BANJO HOUR.
THERE'S NOT GONNA BE ANY MOPING, VIKTOR. THERE JUST ISN'T.
ALSO, MEET FRECKLE! ...OR CALVIN OR SOMETHING.
I DECIDED WE'RE DATING.
I THINK I LEFT MY HAT IN THE CAR. I SHOULD GO... BE WITH MY HAT. IN THE CAR.
YOU MEAN IN THE *STRUGGLE-BUGGY!*
WINK-BLINK WINK WINKY BLINK WINK
VOGUE
"SHUFFLE SHUFFLE"
OH MY. WE HAVE AN INTRUDER... AN *ARMED* ONE.
WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
AHOJ.
SOMEONE SENT YOU TO DELIVER A MESSAGE?
ČO?
...ČO SA DEJE?
AN ENFORCER?
TEČIE MI UMÝVADLO.
YOU'RE HERE TO BUST OUR KNEECAPS?
OH, THAT'S JUST THE NEIGHBOR UPSTAIRS.
IS THERE SOMETHING YOU NEED, MRS. BAPKA?
VODA VYTEKÁ Z RÚROK.
VOGUE

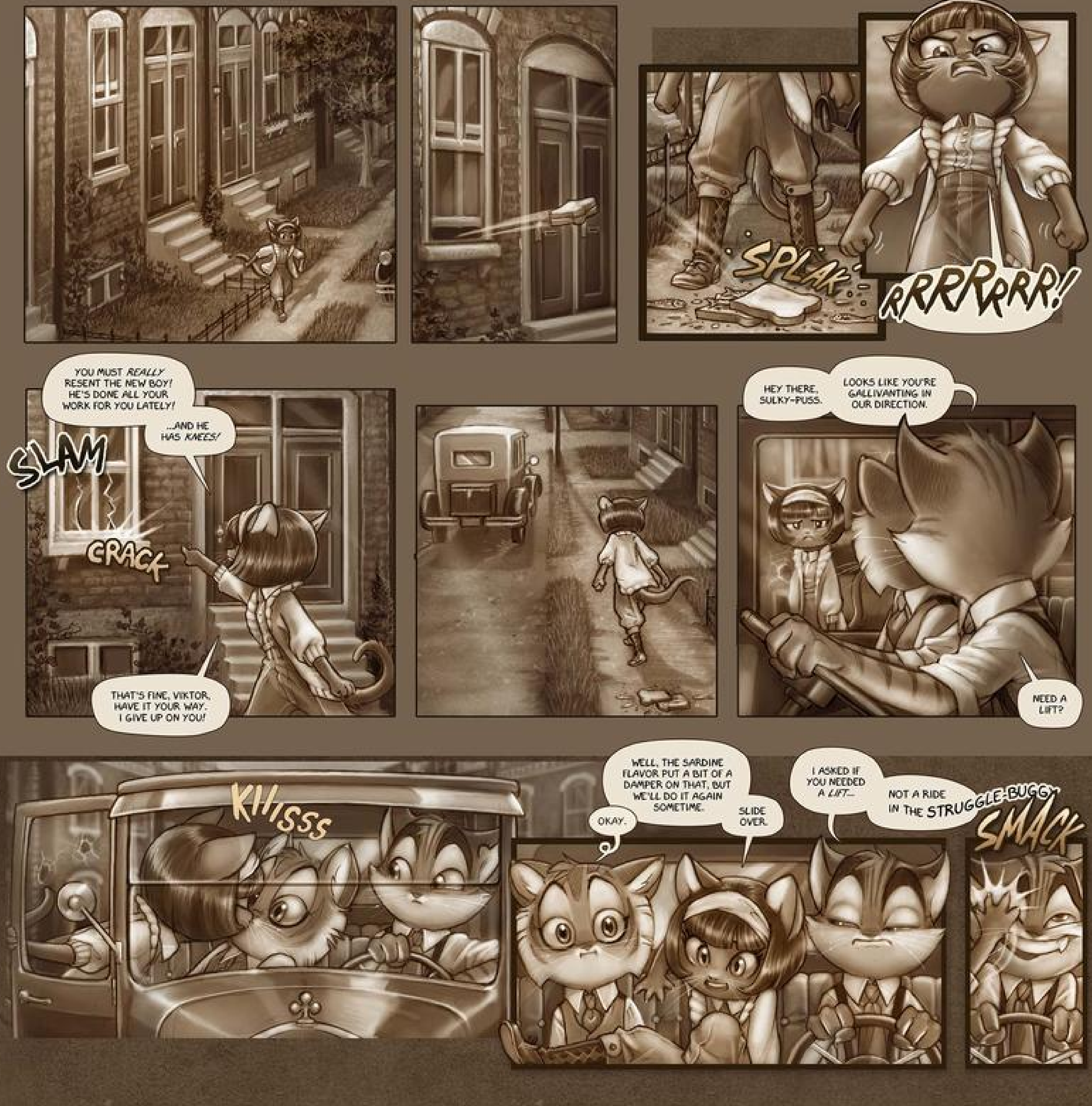

NA POSCHODÍ JE CELÁ PODLAHA ZALIATA VODOU.
MY SINK! MY SINK!
OKAY.
YA, OKAY. I VILL LOOK AT IT.
COUGH COUGH COUGH
UM, HE'S A LITTLE UNDER THE WEATHER, MRS. BAPKA.
I DON'T THINK HE CAN HELP YOU RIGHT NOW.
OHHHHHH.
SI CHORÝ? ÚBOHÝ CHLAPEC.
OHHHHHH.
PRINESIEM TI NIEČO NA JEDENIE.
GASP
PAT PAT PAT
HEY, HANDYMAN MCMURRAY, YOU WANNA RUN UPSTAIRS AND HELP THE YOUNG LADY OUT?
„TOTTER" TOTTER„
NOD NOD NOD NOD
I'LL GO TOO!
YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING – YOU'RE FALLING APART AT THE SEAMS.
JUST STAY HERE. I'LL BE BACK LATER.
AND *YOU*– I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, TRYING TO GET UP NOW.
WELL, I GUESS IT'S JUST YOU AND ME, VIKTOR.
YOUR BELOVED PROTÉGÉ IS IN NEED OF YOUR ADVICE AGAIN.
THAT IS, I'M HOPING YOU CAN POINT ME IN THE DIRECTION OF SOME SUPERIOR *SPIRITUS FRUMENTI* – YOU KNOW, THE *AMBITIOUS* STUFF YOU AND YOUR SCARY, SPECTACLED FRIEND KNEW HOW TO GET BACK IN THE DAY?
VIKTOR?
NO?
I KNEW IT. I SHOULD'VE BROUGHT FLOWERS, OR UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE OR SOMETHING.
WHAT'S THE TRADITIONAL WAY TO SAY "SORRY FOR THAT HOLE IN YOUR CHEST"? PIE?
I BET IT'S PIE. THAT SEEMS RIGHT. EVERYONE LIKES PIE.
...EVERYONE BUT THE BOLSHEVIKS.
AHEM. FEEL FREE TO SHARE IF ANYTHING COMES TO MIND.
...A TIP, OR HINT, OR...
VIKTOR?
VINEGAR?

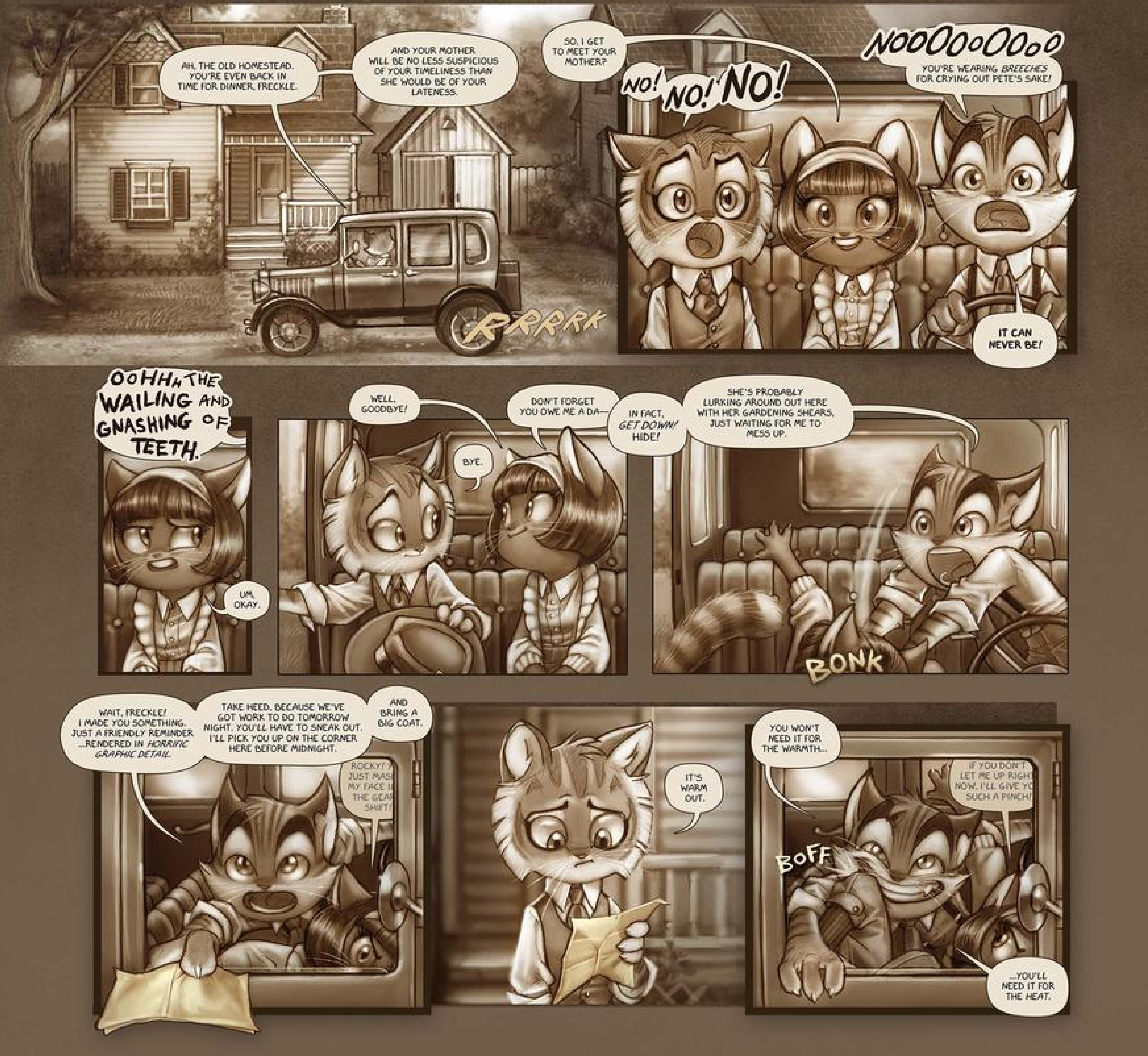

VIKTOR?
IS ANYONE IN TH—
WHOK
YOU ARE DANGEROUS.
YOU'RE IRONIC.
NO GOOD, HELPING YOU.
NO? OKAY, IT'S A GAMBLE, I'LL ADMIT...
BUT THERE'S LITTLE TO BE LOST FROM WHERE I SIT.
UNLESS YOU'RE ANXIOUS TO SEE OUR LACKADAISY PASS INTO MEMORY...
SO YOU CAN SOONER CONSIGN YOURSELF HERE TO THE UH, GALLERY OF PAISLEY AND REGRET.
DON'T GET ME WRONG. IT HAS ITS CHARMS, BUT—
SIIIGH...
...IN DEFIANCE.
DEFIANCE! THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
...UH, IN DEFIANCE OF WHAT, EXACTLY?
IN DEFIANCE, MISSOURI...

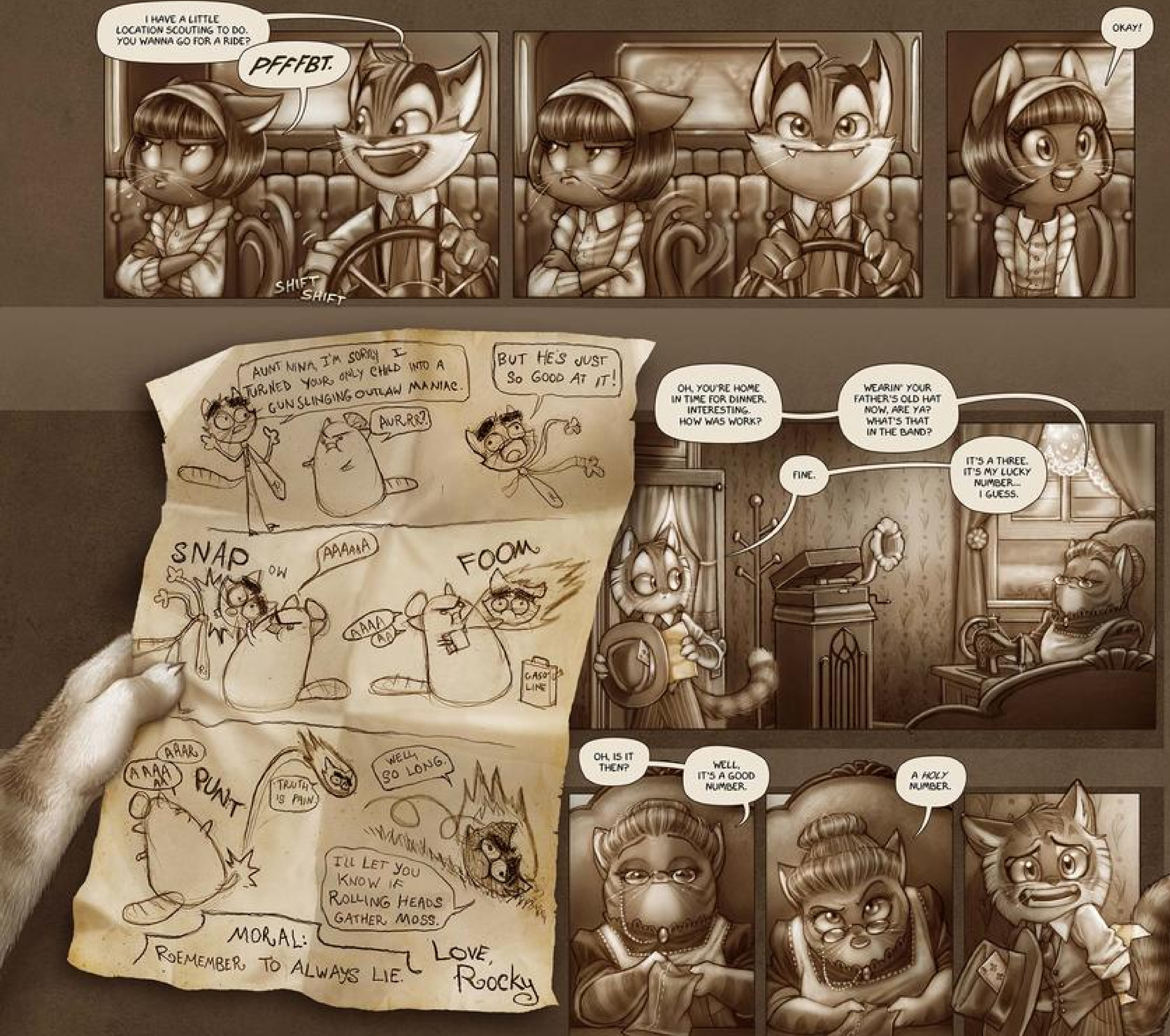

I THINK I FOUND THE PROBLEM.
THERE'S SOMETHING JAMMED INTO THE TRAP.
HMM. AND THERE'S SOMETHING I'M CURIOUS TO KNOW, NOW THAT I FINALLY HAVE YOU ALONE FOR A MOMENT...
OPRAVIL SI TO?
...SORT OF.
IS IT TRUE *YOU* ICED THOSE MOONSHINERS WHO STORMED IN AND CAUSED ALL THE RUCKUS LAST NIGHT?
I...
GLURP
OH.
HHHHUUHH!!
I CAN'T BREATHE UNDER HERE!
...BECAUSE I'M HAVING TROUBLE PICTURING IT.
GASP
GASP
OHHHHHH.

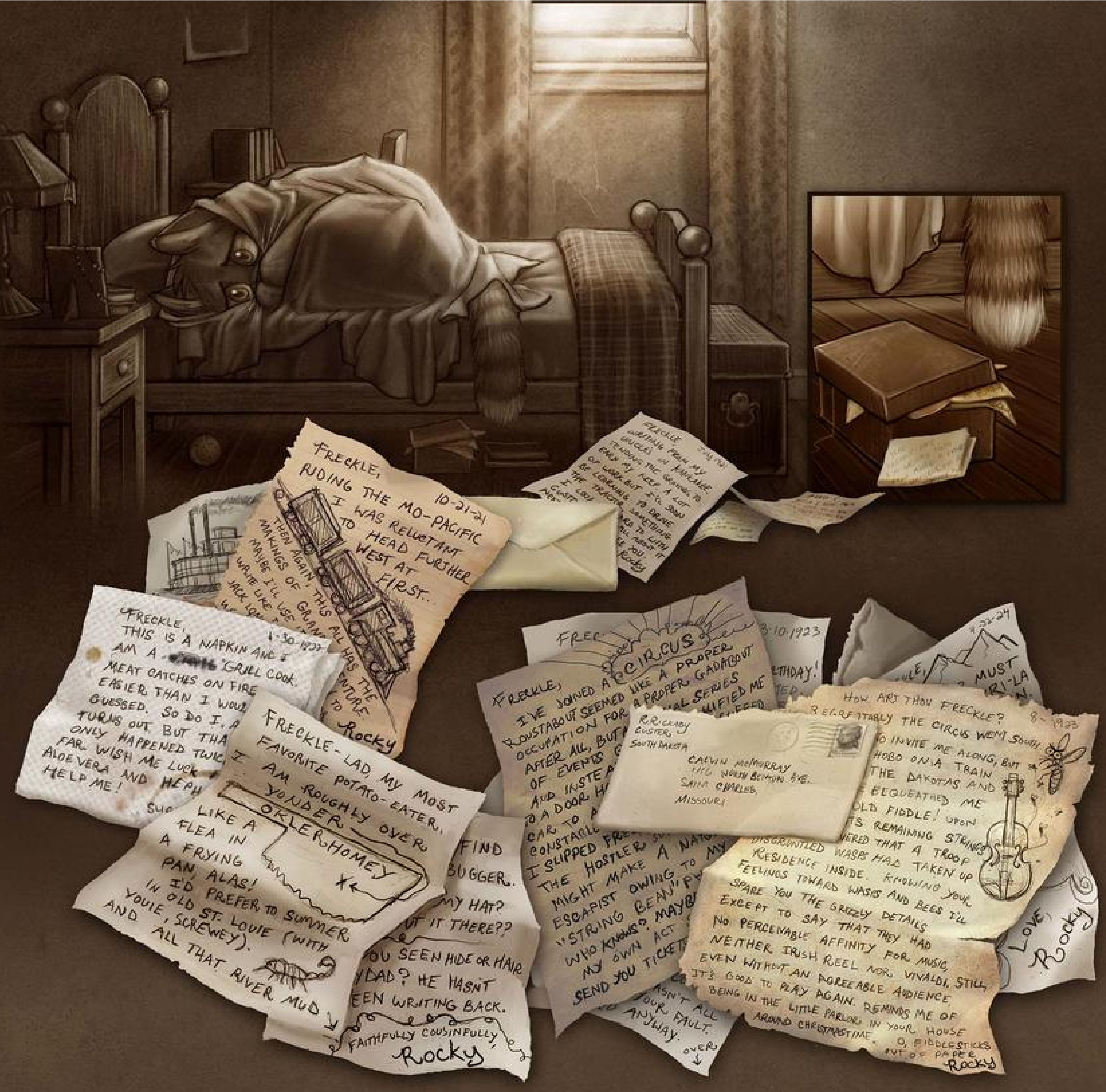

SO IF IT BOTHERED YOU SO MUCH, WHAT ARE YOU DOING GADDING ABOUT WITH YOUR DINGBAT COUSIN AGAIN TODAY?
WELL, HE AND I... A WHILE AGO... AND I FELT BAD... AND THEN HE CAME BACK AND I...
SIGH I NEEDED A JOB.
HMMM. NO.
NO?
NO. YOU'RE TRYING TO SELL ME THE GARBLED AND ABRIDGED VERSION.
I'VE SEEN PLENTY OF YOU HOODS COME AND GO. NO ONE EVER DOES THIS JUST BECAUSE THEY NEEDED A JOB.
CLEARLY YOU COULD MAKE A LIVING CRAWLING AROUND IN OLD LADIES' CABINETS...
GETTING PAID SANDWICHES...
WHAT DARK SECRET LED YOU TO THIS LIFE OF CRIME INSTEAD?
I LIKE SANDWICHES BETTER THAN PEANUTS.
WHAT? THAT'S A PRETTY LOUSY EXCUSE FOR A DARK SECRET.
IT WAS MORE OF A JOKE THAN A SECRET.
I'D SAY IT WAS MORE OF AN EVASION THAN A JOKE.
YOU'RE A TOUGH PEANUT TO CRACK, CALVIN MC...SOMETHING. BUT I'LL FIGURE YOU OUT YET.
ANYHOW, I LIKE SANDWICHES TOO.
CRUNCH
CHEW
MOSTLY.
SQUEAK
CHEW
GNA GNA
SMACK
CHEEEEEW...
HUAAUGH! NO!
P-TUGH-
UAGH-UAAAH


WELL, THE BOYS ARE OFF TO WHATEVER ILLICIT ERRANDS THEY HAVE LEFT ON THEIR SCHEDULE TODAY.
I WAS THINKING I COULD LINGER AROUND AND READ YOU THE LATEST WODEHOUSE OR SOMETHING.
BUT YOU STILL HAVE TRACES OF THAT LOOK ON YOUR FACE.
THAT LOOK YOU GAVE MY NEW FRIEND...
LIKE YOU WERE TRYING TO LIGHT HIM ON FIRE WITH YOUR EYEBALL...
IT LEADS ME TO WONDER, VIKTOR...
IF YOU'RE THE REASON CHAD IS AFRAID OF ME!
IT WAS YOU, WASN'T IT?
WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
CHAD VAS...
BAD.
OH, REALLY? AND CLAUDE? THAT WAS YOUR WORK TOO?
CLAUDE VAS...
LET ME GUESS – FLAWED?
YA.
AND CECIL?
HE VAS, UHH...
OH, DON'T BOTHER ANSWERING THAT.
NOTHING RHYMES WITH CECIL ANYWAY.
TERRIBLE NAME.
AND ALSO HE VAS NO GOOD.
WHAT'S NO GOOD IS YOU SABOTAGING MY SOCIAL LIFE. I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS!
NO.
NO!?
YOU HAVE ALVAYS THESE REASONS FOR STAYING HERE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE.
YOU SHOULD NOT BE AROUND HERE AT ALL.
LAST NIGHT—
YOU MEAN AT LACKADAISY?
BUT I WENT TO ALL THAT TROUBLE SO I COULD STAY FOR THE SUMMER.
AND NOW YOU'RE NOT MY FRIEND AND YOU DON'T WANT ME AROUND?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT? YOU'RE BORED BECAUSE YOU CAN'T DO ALL THE HORRIBLE THINGS YOU USED TO DO, SO NOW YOU'RE PLAYING CONCERNED PATRIARCH?
WELL, EITHER WAY, YOU'RE JUST A MONSTER.
SPLUK
HERE. YOUR NEIGHBOR MADE YOU A QUESTIONABLE SANDWICH.
YOU CAN EAT IT BY YOURSELF.


SPLAK
RRRRRRR!
YOU MUST REALLY RESENT THE NEW BOY! HE'S DONE ALL YOUR WORK FOR YOU LATELY!
...AND HE HAS KNEES!
SLAM
CRACK
THAT'S FINE, VIKTOR, HAVE IT YOUR WAY. I GIVE UP ON YOU!
HEY THERE, SULKY-PUSS.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GALLIVANTING IN OUR DIRECTION.
NEED A LIFT?
KIIISSS
WELL, THE SARDINE FLAVOR PUT A BIT OF A DAMPER ON THAT, BUT WE'LL DO IT AGAIN SOMETIME.
OKAY.
SLIDE OVER.
I ASKED IF YOU NEEDED A LIFT...
NOT A RIDE IN THE STRUGGLE-BUGGY
SMACK


AH, THE OLD HOMESTEAD. YOU'RE EVEN BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER, FRECKLE.
AND YOUR MOTHER WILL BE NO LESS SUSPICIOUS OF YOUR TIMELINESS THAN SHE WOULD BE OF YOUR LATENESS.
RRRRK
SO, I GET TO MEET YOUR MOTHER?
NO! NO! NO!
NOOOOoOOoO
YOU'RE WEARING *BREECHES* FOR CRYING OUT PETE'S SAKE!
IT CAN NEVER BE!
OOHHH THE WAILING AND GNASHING OF TEETH.
UM, OKAY.
WELL, GOODBYE!
BYE.
DON'T FORGET YOU OWE ME A DA—
IN FACT, *GET DOWN!* HIDE!
SHE'S PROBABLY LURKING AROUND OUT HERE WITH HER GARDENING SHEARS, JUST WAITING FOR ME TO MESS UP.
BONK
WAIT, FRECKLE! I MADE YOU SOMETHING. JUST A FRIENDLY REMINDER ...RENDERED IN *HORRIFIC GRAPHIC DETAIL.*
TAKE HEED, BECAUSE WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO TOMORROW NIGHT. YOU'LL HAVE TO SNEAK OUT. I'LL PICK YOU UP ON THE CORNER HERE BEFORE MIDNIGHT.
AND BRING A BIG COAT.
ROCKY! Y JUST MAS MY FACE I THE GEA SHIFT!
IT'S WARM OUT.
YOU WON'T NEED IT FOR THE WARMTH...
BOFF
IF YOU DON'T LET ME UP RIGH NOW, I'LL GIVE YO SUCH A PINCH!
...YOU'LL NEED IT FOR THE HEAT.


I HAVE A LITTLE LOCATION SCOUTING TO DO. YOU WANNA GO FOR A RIDE?
PFFFBT.
SHIFT SHIFT
OKAY!
AUNT NINA, I'M SORRY I TURNED YOUR ONLY CHILD INTO A GUNSLINGING OUTLAW MANIAC.
AURR?
BUT HE'S JUST SO GOOD AT IT!
SNAP
OW
AAAAAA
FOOM
AAAA AA
GASO LINE
AAAR
AAAA AA
PUNT
TRUTH IS PAIN
WELL SO LONG.
I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF ROLLING HEADS GATHER MOSS.
MORAL: REMEMBER TO ALWAYS LIE.
LOVE, Rocky
OH, YOU'RE HOME IN TIME FOR DINNER. INTERESTING. HOW WAS WORK?
FINE.
WEARIN' YOUR FATHER'S OLD HAT NOW, ARE YA? WHAT'S THAT IN THE BAND?
IT'S A THREE. IT'S MY LUCKY NUMBER... I GUESS.
OH, IS IT THEN?
WELL, IT'S A GOOD NUMBER.
A HOLY NUMBER.



FRECKLE,
RIDING THE MO-PACIFIC 10-21-21
I WAS RELUCTANT
TO HEAD FURTHER
WEST AT
FIRST.
THEN AGAIN, THIS ALL HAS THE
MAKINGS OF GRAND ADVENTURE
WAIVE I'LL USE
JACK LIKE
Rocky

FRECKLE,
THIS IS A NAPKIN AND I 1-30-1922
AM A GRILL COOK.
MEAT CATCHES ON FIRE
EASIER THAN I WOU
GUESSED. SO DO I, A
TURNS OUT. BUT THA
ONLY HAPPENED TWIC
FAR. WISH ME LUCK
ALOE VERA AND HEAV
HELP ME!

FRECKLE-LAD, MY MOST
FAVORITE POTATO-EATER,
I AM ROUGHLY OVER
YONDER
OKLER-HOMEY
X
LIKE A
FLEA IN
A FRYING
PAN, ALAS!
I'D PREFER TO SUMMER
IN OLD ST. LOUIE (WITH
YOUIE, SCREWEY).
AND ALL THAT RIVER MUD

FIND
BUGGER.
MY HAT?
UT IT THERE??
OU SEEN HIDE OR HAIR
Y DAD? HE HASN'T
EEN WRITING BACK.
FAITHFULLY COUSINFULLY,
Rocky

CIRCUS
FREC 3-10-1923
FRECKLE,
I'VE JOINED A
ROUSTABOUT SEEMED LIKE A PROPER
OCCUPATION FOR A PROPER GADABOUT
AFTER ALL, BUT A SERIES
OF EVENTS QUALIFIED ME
AND INSTEA
TO A DOOR HA
CAR TO A
CONSTABLE
I SLIPPED FRE
THE HOSTLER SU
MIGHT MAKE A NAT
ESCAPIST OWING TO MY
"STRING BEAN", P
WHO KNOWS? MAYB
MY OWN ACT
SEND YOU TICKET

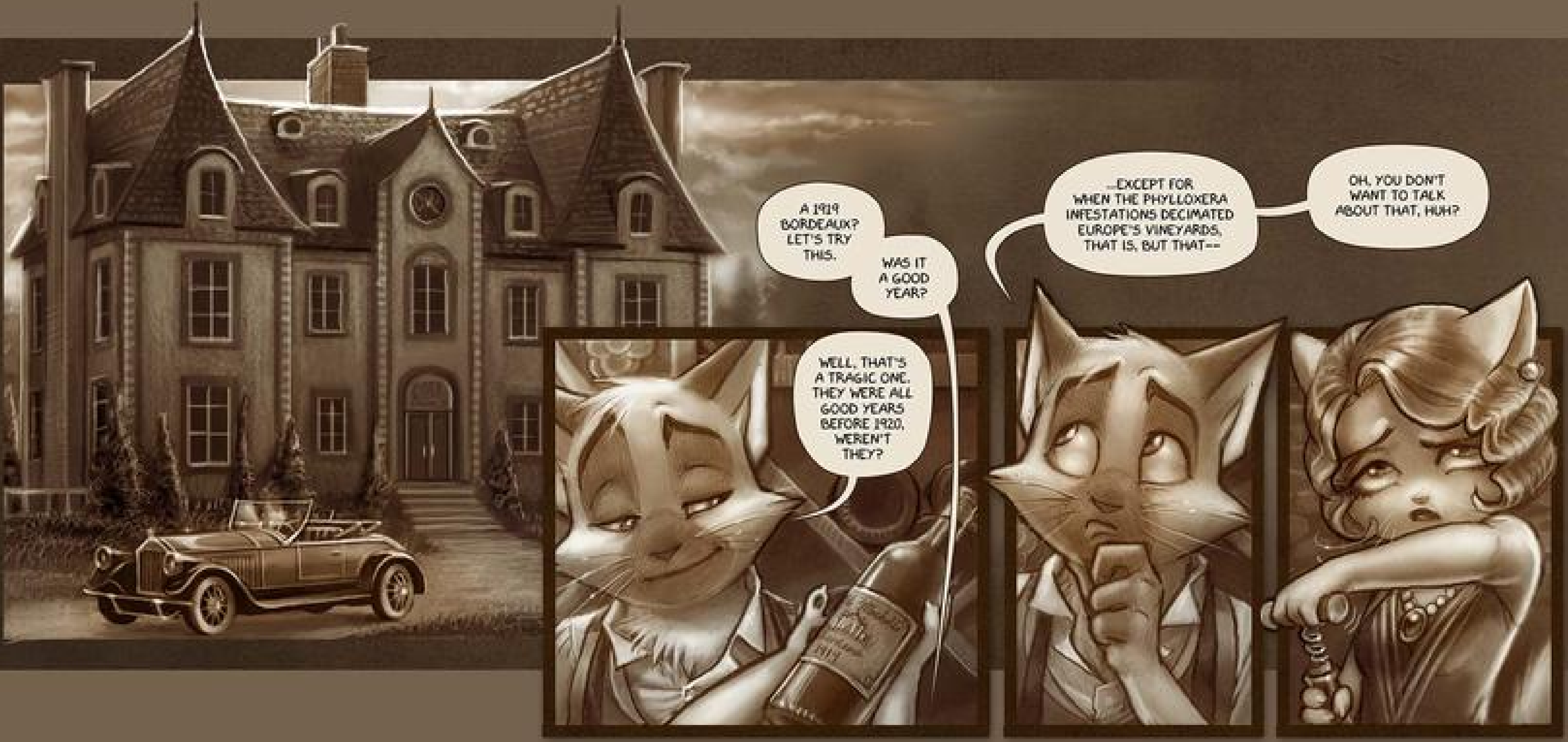
RTHDAY!
ASN'T ALL
OUR FAULT.
ANYWAY.
OVER

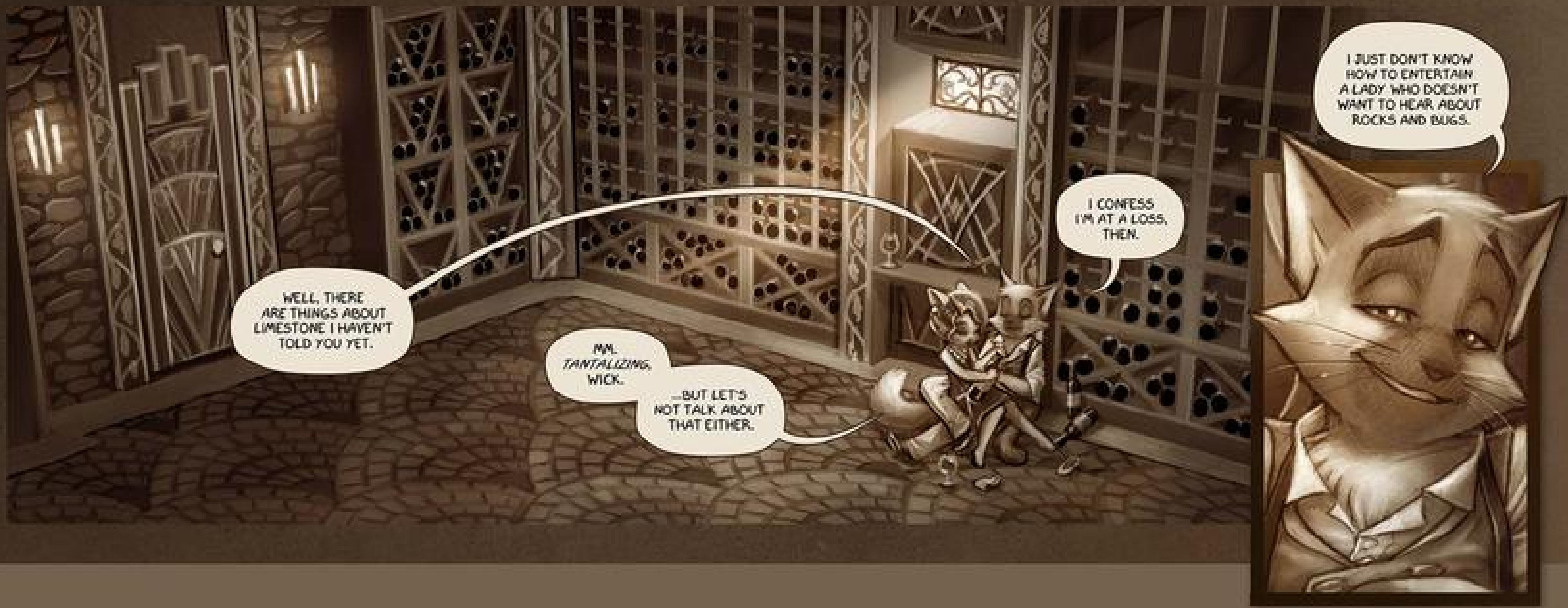
R. RICKABY
CUSTER,
SOUTH DAKOTA

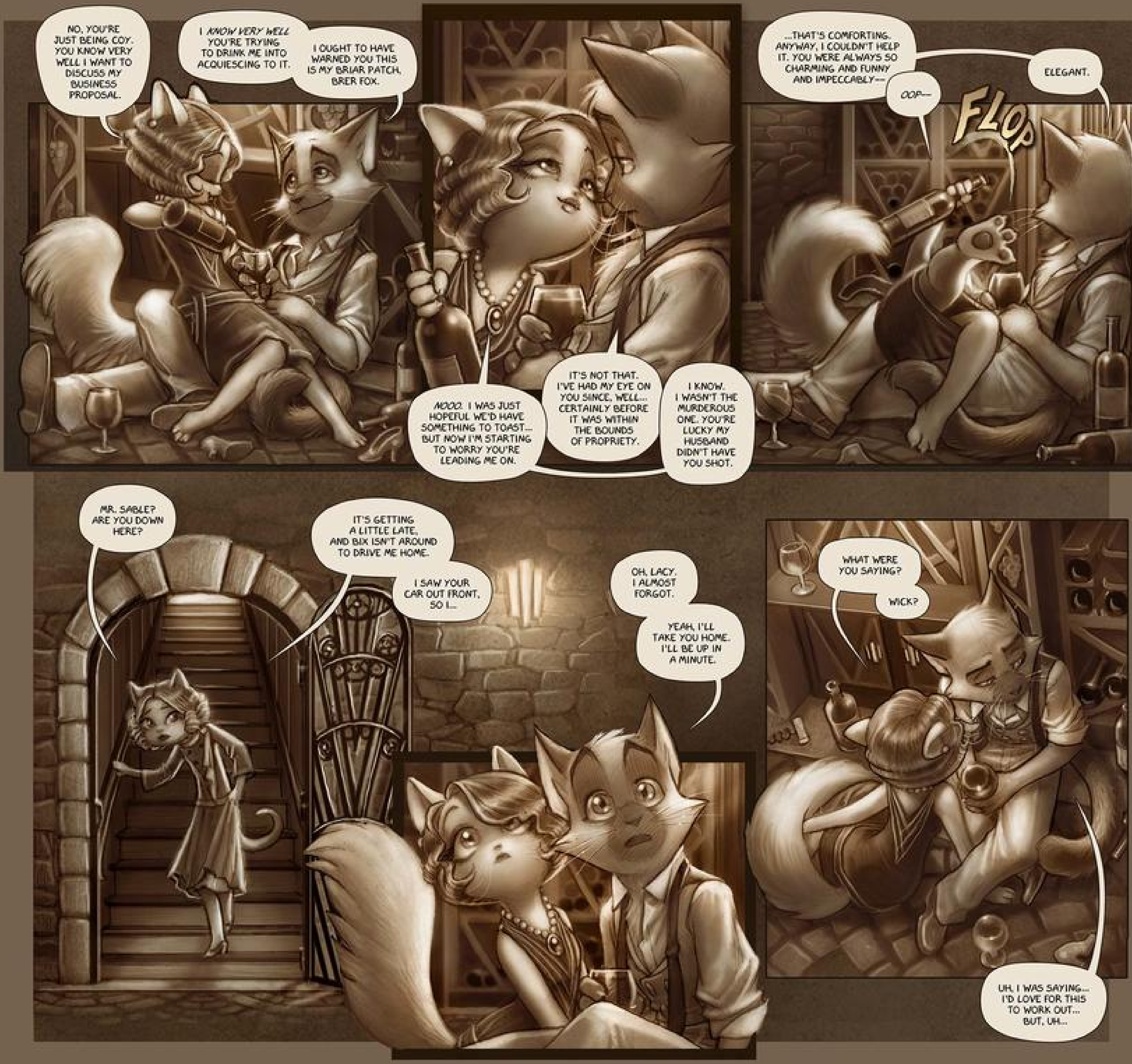
CALVIN McMURRAY
110 NORTH BENTON AVE.
SAINT CHARLES,
MISSOURI

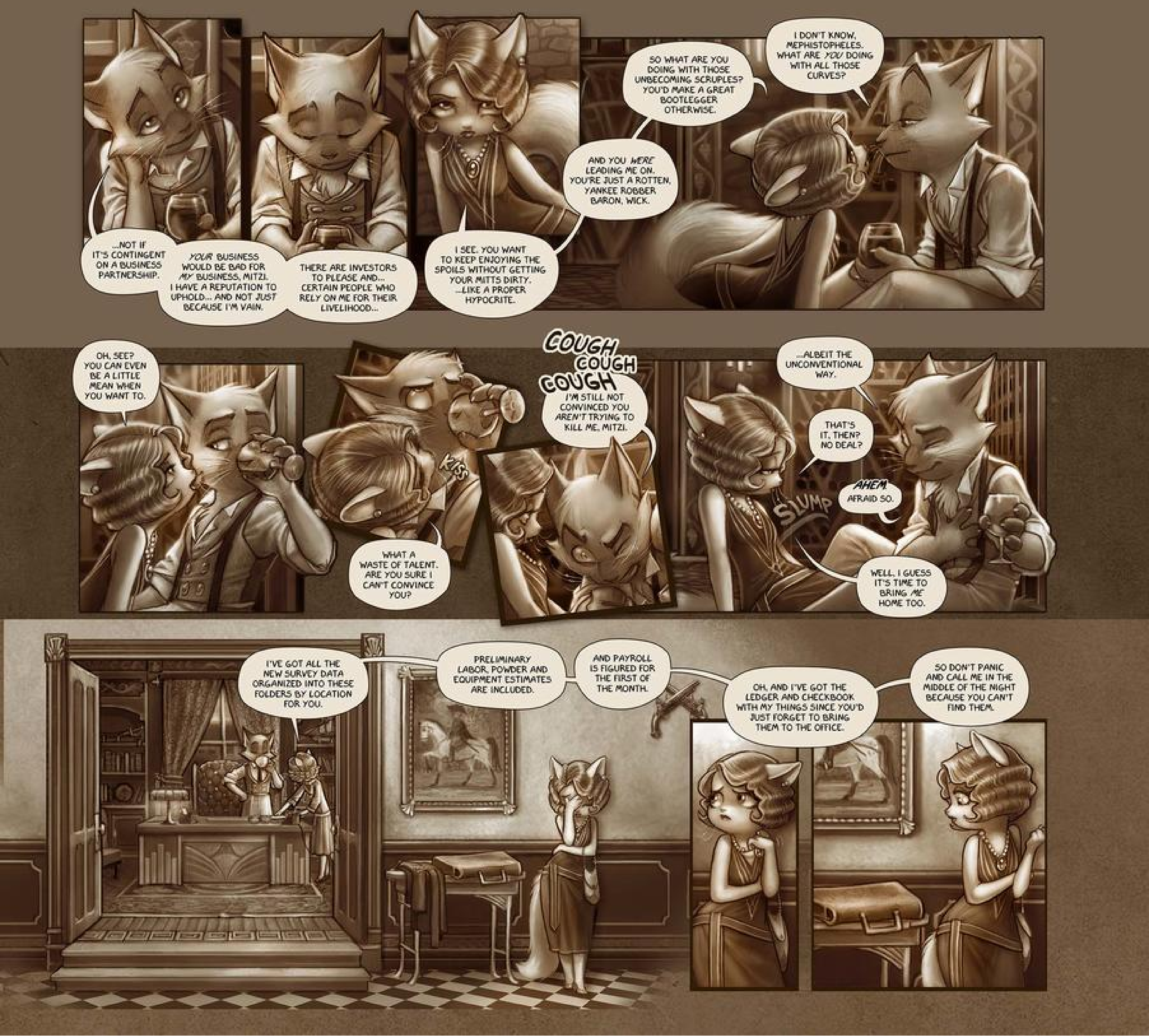
HOW ART THOU FRECKLE?
REGRETTABLY THE CIRCUS WENT SOUTH 8-1923
O INVITE ME ALONG, BUT
HOBO ON A TRAIN
THE DAKOTAS AND
BEQUEATHED ME
OLD FIDDLE! UPON
TS REMAINING STRINGS
ERED THAT A TROOP
DISGRUNTLED WASPS HAD TAKEN UP
RESIDENCE INSIDE. KNOWING YOUR
FEELINGS TOWARD WASPS AND BEES I'LL
SPARE YOU THE GRIZZLY DETAILS
EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THEY HAD
NO PERCEIVABLE AFFINITY FOR MUSIC,
NEITHER IRISH REEL NOR VIVALDI. STILL,
EVEN WITHOUT AN AGREEABLE AUDIENCE
IT'S GOOD TO PLAY AGAIN. REMINDS ME OF
BEING IN THE LITTLE PARLOR IN YOUR HOUSE
AROUND CHRISTMASTIME. O, FIDDLESTICKS
OUT OF PAPER
Rocky

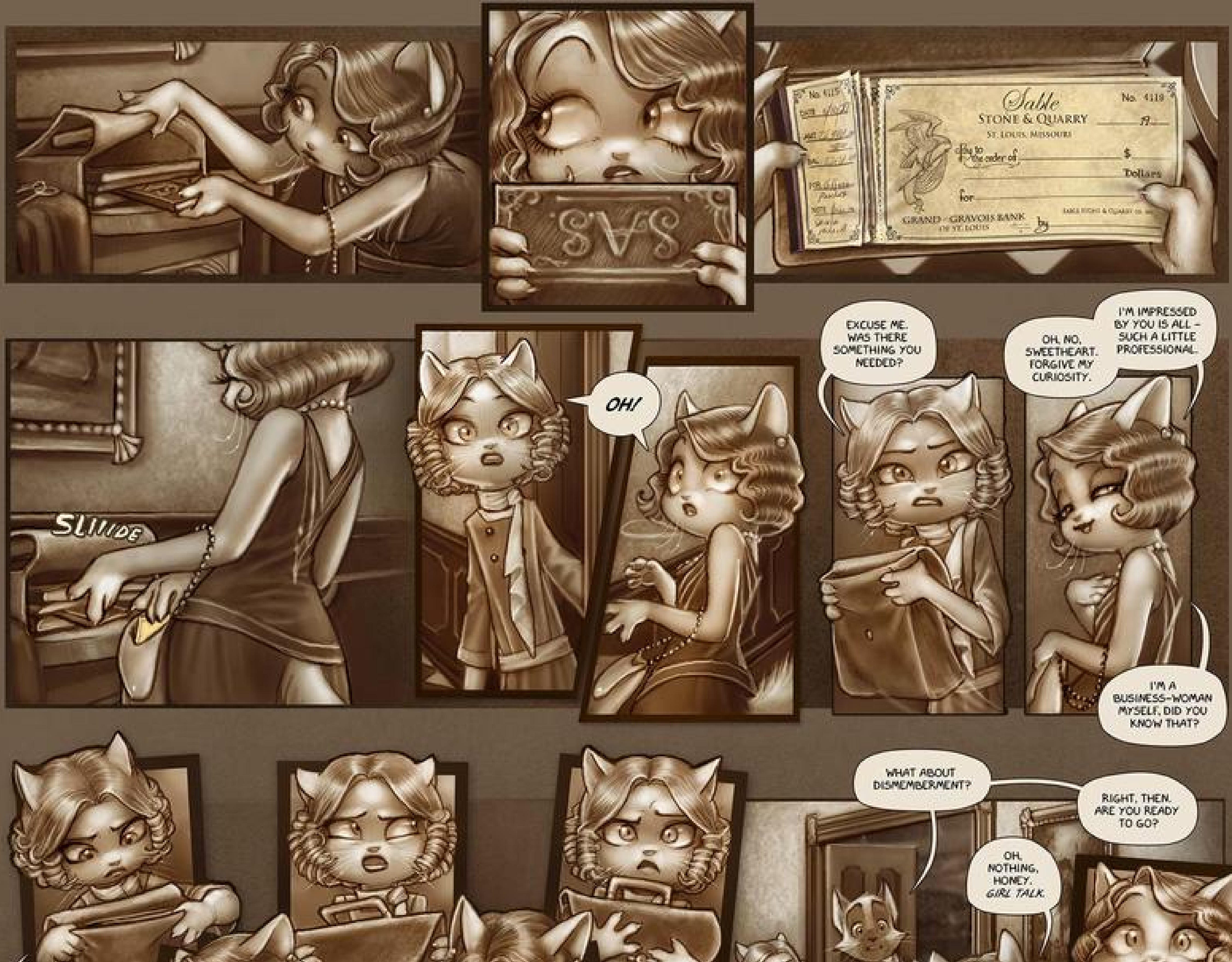
4-22-24
MUST
RI-LA
Love,
Rocky

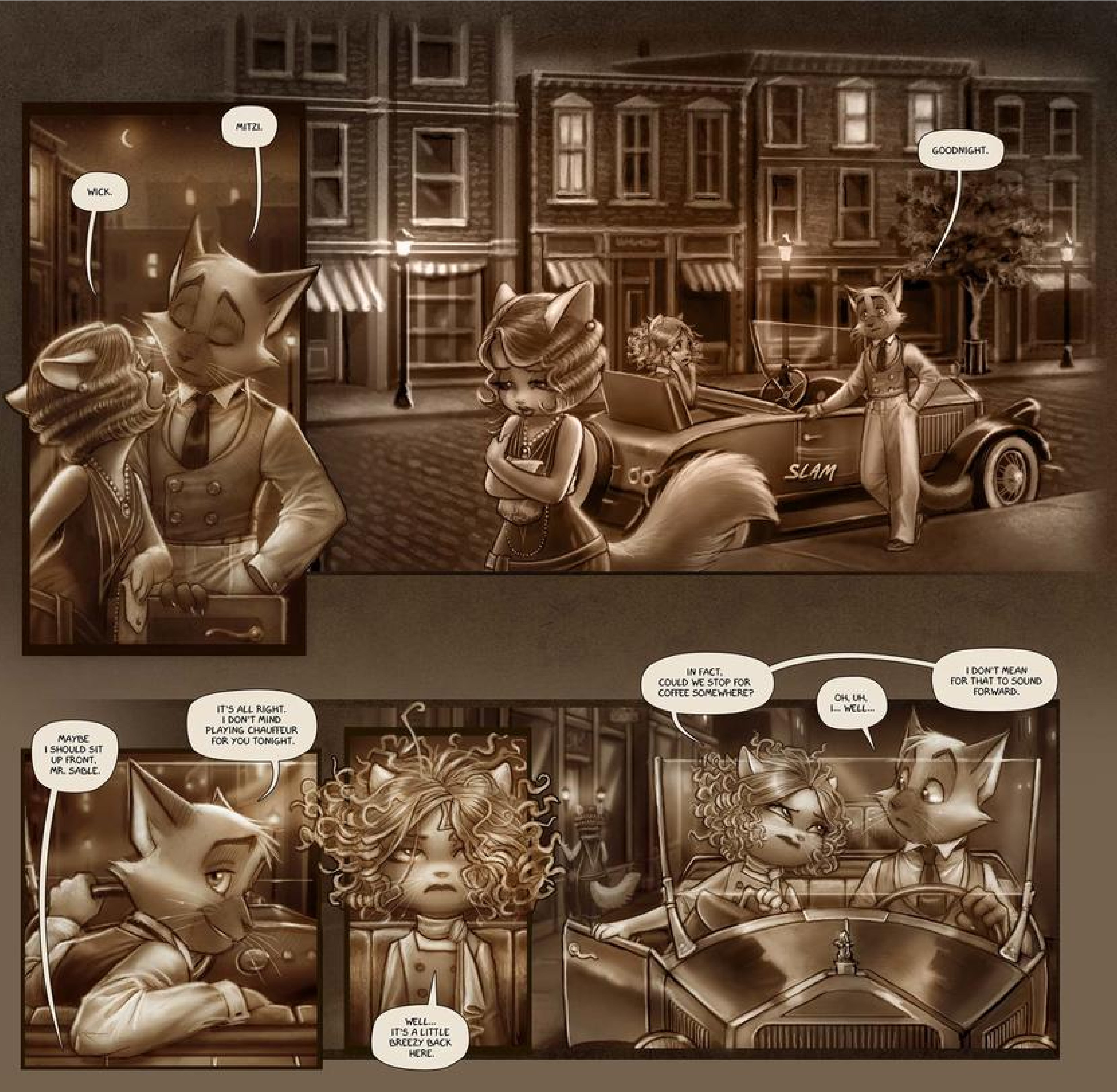

A 1919 BORDEAUX? LET'S TRY THIS.
WAS IT A GOOD YEAR?
WELL, THAT'S A TRAGIC ONE. THEY WERE ALL GOOD YEARS BEFORE 1920, WEREN'T THEY?
...EXCEPT FOR WHEN THE PHYLLOXERA INFESTATIONS DECIMATED EUROPE'S VINEYARDS, THAT IS, BUT THAT--
OH, YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT, HUH?

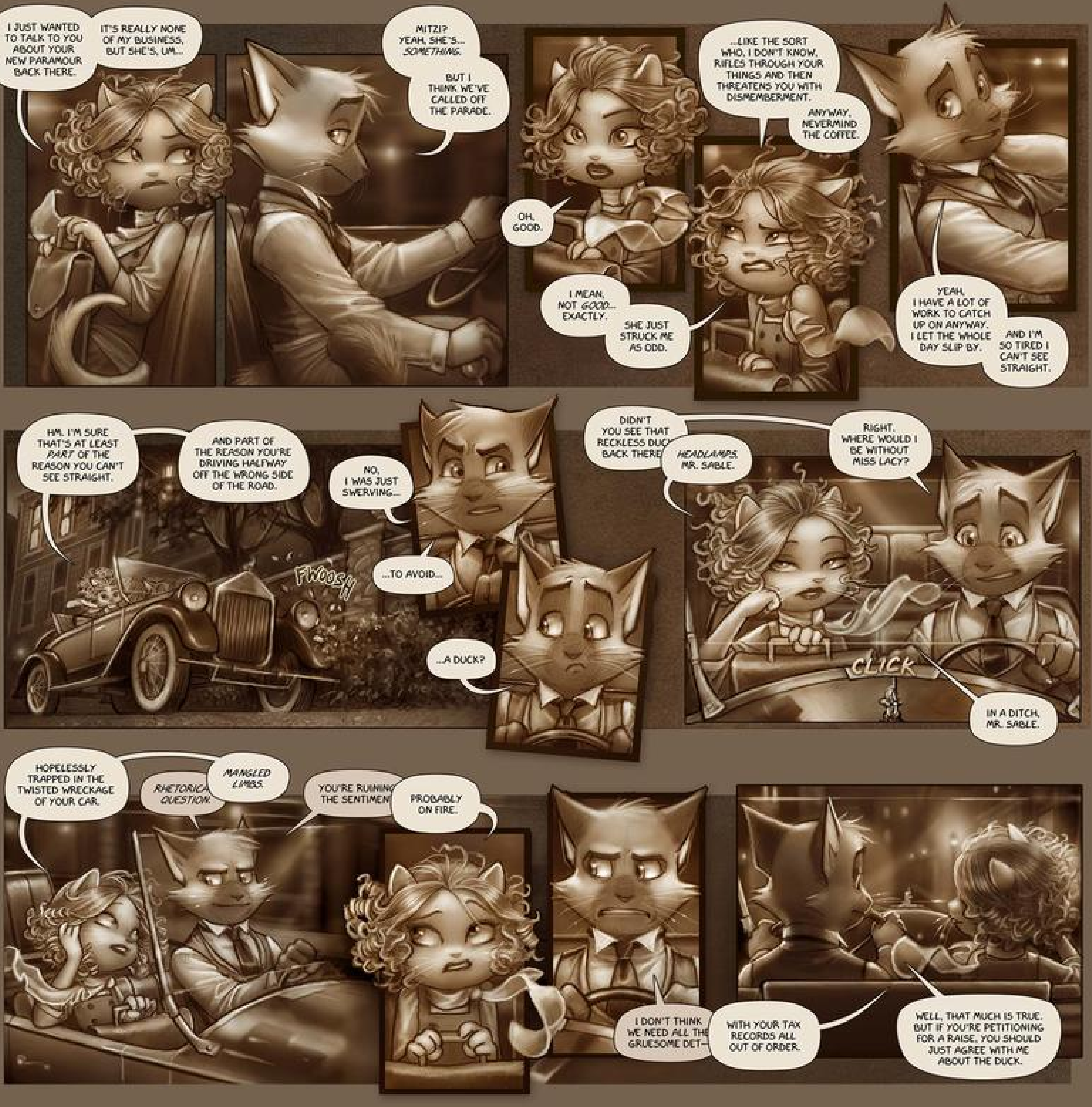

WELL, THERE *ARE* THINGS ABOUT LIMESTONE I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU YET.
MM. *TANTALIZING,* WICK.
...BUT LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT THAT EITHER.
I CONFESS I'M AT A LOSS, THEN.
I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO ENTERTAIN A LADY WHO DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT ROCKS AND BUGS.

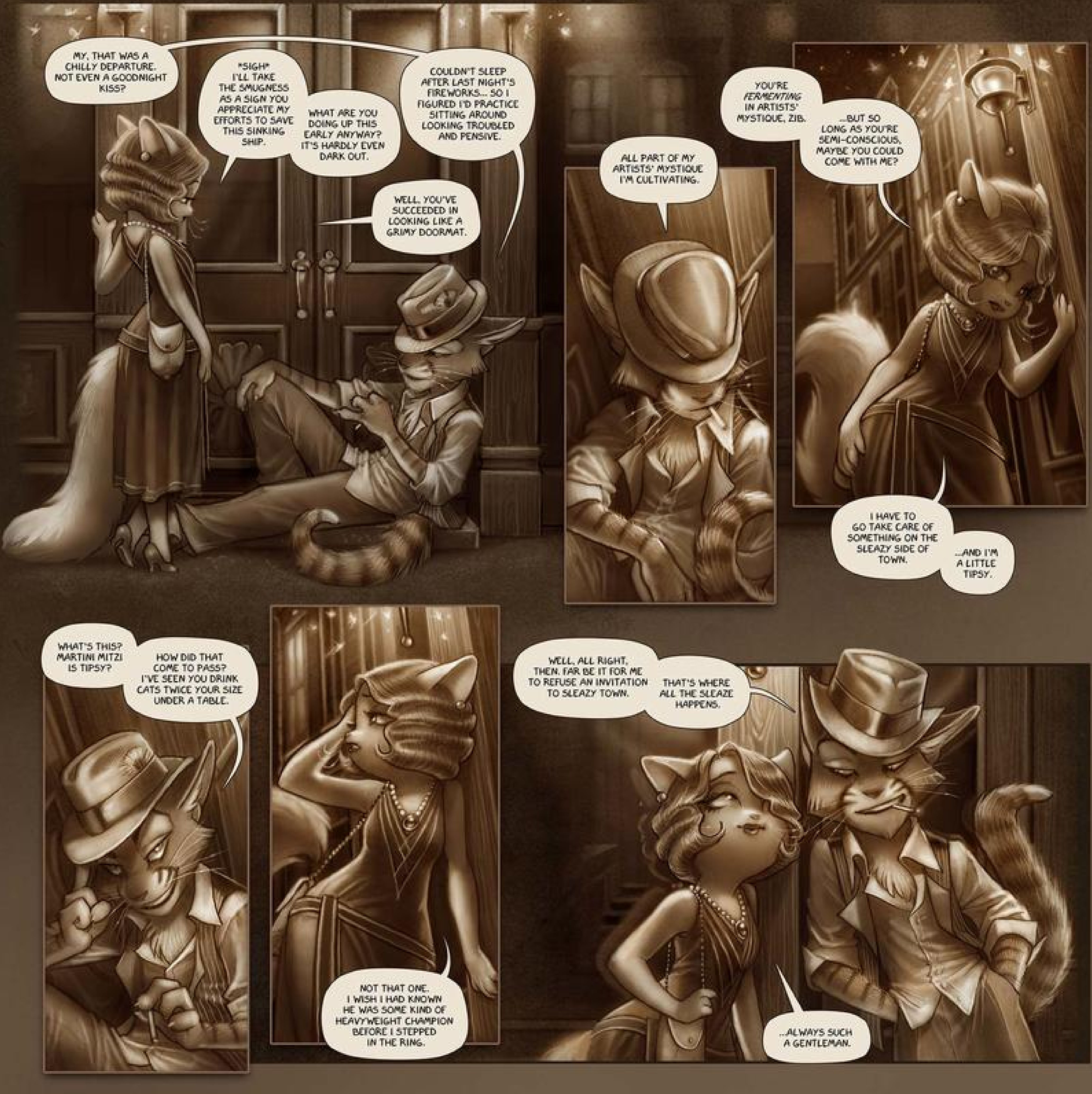

NO, YOU'RE JUST BEING COY. YOU KNOW VERY WELL I WANT TO DISCUSS MY BUSINESS PROPOSAL.
I *KNOW VERY WELL* YOU'RE TRYING TO DRINK ME INTO ACQUIESCING TO IT.
I OUGHT TO HAVE WARNED YOU THIS IS MY BRIAR PATCH, BRER FOX.
NOOO. I WAS JUST HOPEFUL WE'D HAVE SOMETHING TO TOAST... BUT NOW I'M STARTING TO WORRY YOU'RE LEADING ME ON.
IT'S NOT THAT. I'VE HAD MY EYE ON YOU SINCE, WELL... CERTAINLY BEFORE IT WAS WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF PROPRIETY.
I KNOW. I WASN'T THE MURDEROUS ONE. YOU'RE LUCKY MY HUSBAND DIDN'T HAVE YOU SHOT.
...THAT'S COMFORTING. ANYWAY, I COULDN'T HELP IT. YOU WERE ALWAYS SO CHARMING AND FUNNY AND IMPECCABLY—
OOP—
FLOP
ELEGANT.
MR. SABLE? ARE YOU DOWN HERE?
IT'S GETTING A LITTLE LATE, AND BIX ISN'T AROUND TO DRIVE ME HOME.
I SAW YOUR CAR OUT FRONT, SO I...
OH, LACY. I ALMOST FORGOT.
YEAH, I'LL TAKE YOU HOME. I'LL BE UP IN A MINUTE.
WHAT WERE YOU SAYING?
WICK?
UH, I WAS SAYING... I'D LOVE FOR THIS TO WORK OUT... BUT, UH...

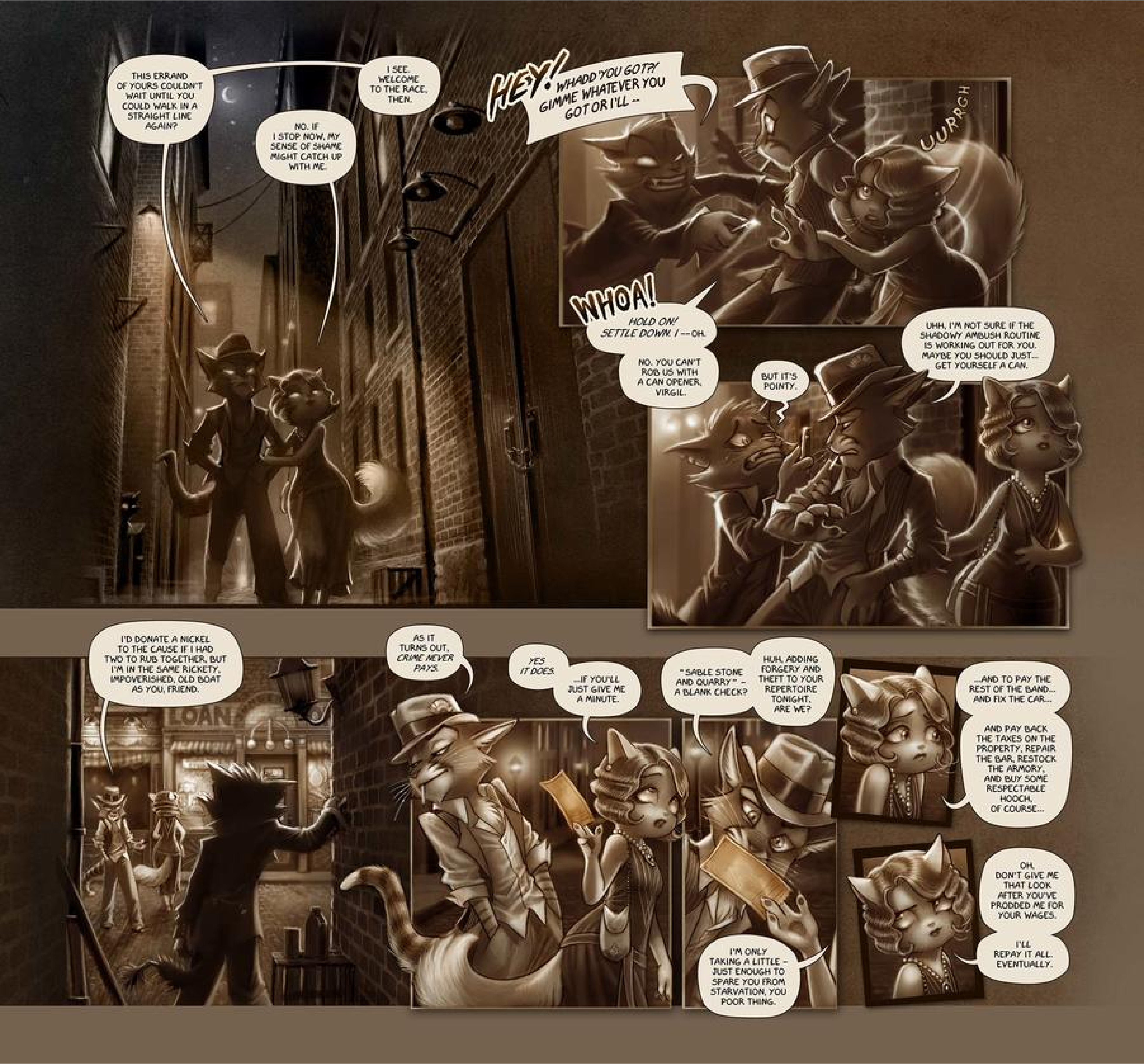

...NOT IF IT'S CONTINGENT ON A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP.
YOUR BUSINESS WOULD BE BAD FOR *MY* BUSINESS, MITZI. I HAVE A REPUTATION TO UPHOLD... AND NOT JUST BECAUSE I'M VAIN.
THERE ARE INVESTORS TO PLEASE AND... CERTAIN PEOPLE WHO RELY ON ME FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD...
I SEE. YOU WANT TO KEEP ENJOYING THE SPOILS WITHOUT GETTING YOUR MITTS DIRTY. ...LIKE A PROPER HYPOCRITE.
AND YOU *WERE* LEADING ME ON. YOU'RE JUST A ROTTEN, YANKEE ROBBER BARON, WICK.
SO WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THOSE UNBECOMING SCRUPLES? YOU'D MAKE A GREAT BOOTLEGGER OTHERWISE.
I DON'T KNOW, MEPHISTOPHELES. WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING WITH ALL THOSE CURVES?
OH, SEE? YOU CAN EVEN BE A LITTLE MEAN WHEN YOU WANT TO.
KISS
WHAT A WASTE OF TALENT. ARE YOU SURE I CAN'T CONVINCE YOU?
COUGH COUGH COUGH
I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED YOU *AREN'T* TRYING TO KILL ME, MITZI.
...ALBEIT THE UNCONVENTIONAL WAY.
THAT'S IT, THEN? NO DEAL?
AHEM. AFRAID SO.
SLUMP
WELL, I GUESS IT'S TIME TO BRING *ME* HOME TOO.
I'VE GOT ALL THE NEW SURVEY DATA ORGANIZED INTO THESE FOLDERS BY LOCATION FOR YOU.
PRELIMINARY LABOR, POWDER AND EQUIPMENT ESTIMATES ARE INCLUDED.
AND PAYROLL IS FIGURED FOR THE FIRST OF THE MONTH.
OH, AND I'VE GOT THE LEDGER AND CHECKBOOK WITH MY THINGS SINCE YOU'D JUST FORGET TO BRING THEM TO THE OFFICE.
SO DON'T PANIC AND CALL ME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT BECAUSE YOU CAN'T FIND THEM.

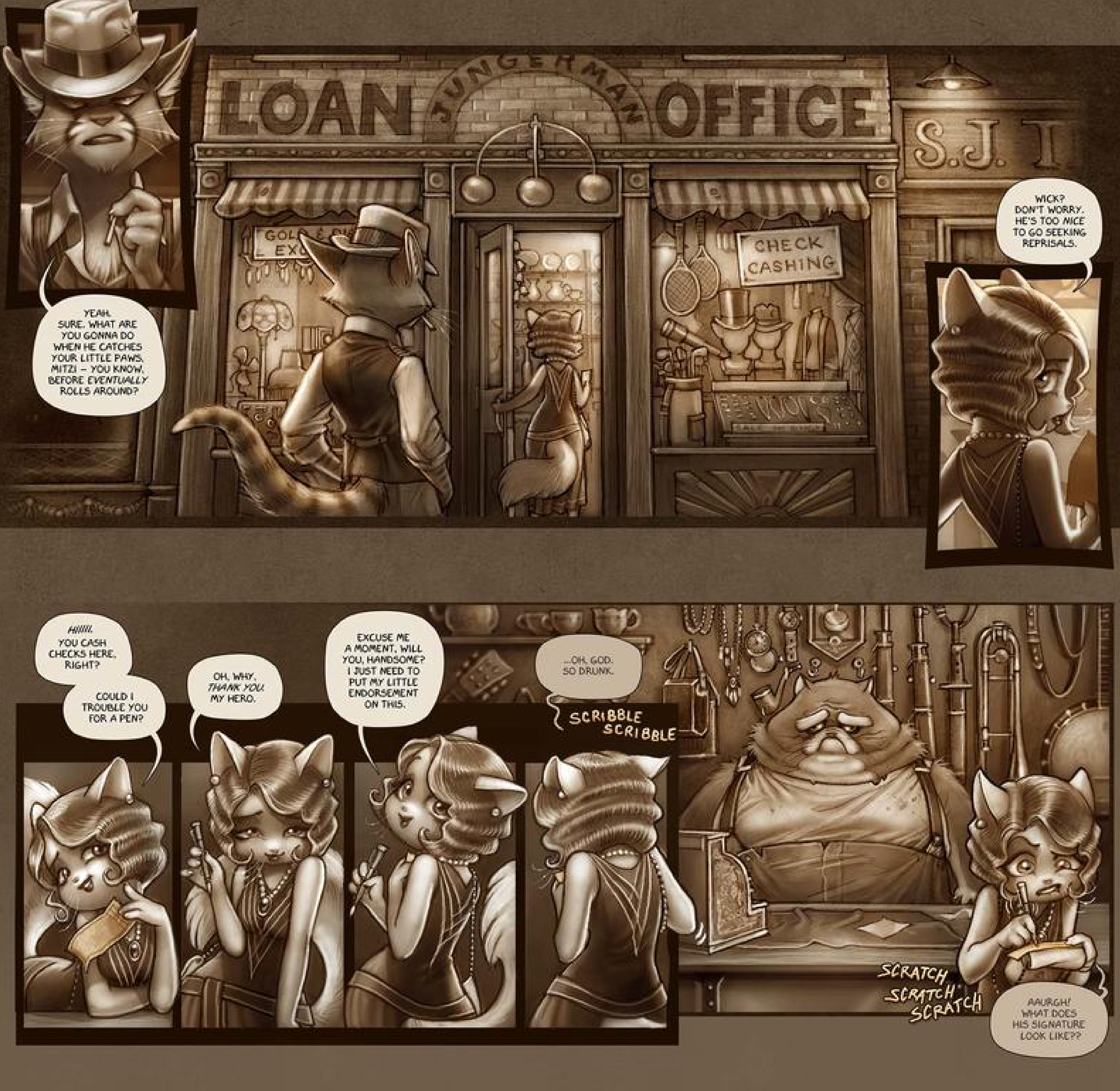

SAS
Sable
STONE & QUARRY
No. 4119
St. Louis, Missouri
Pay to the order of
Dollars
for
GRAND-GRAVOIS BANK OF ST. LOUIS
by
SLIIIDE
OH!
EXCUSE ME. WAS THERE SOMETHING YOU NEEDED?
OH, NO, SWEETHEART. FORGIVE MY CURIOSITY.
I'M IMPRESSED BY YOU IS ALL – SUCH A LITTLE PROFESSIONAL.
I'M A BUSINESS-WOMAN MYSELF, DID YOU KNOW THAT?
UH, NO, I—
I RUN A LITTLE GEM OF A GIN JOINT DOWN BY THE LANDING.
OH, BUT IT IS A REGRETTABLY VIOLENT LINE OF WORK AT TIMES.
OH. THAT'S... INTERESTING.
I'M SURE YOU'VE READ ABOUT THAT SORT OF THING IN THE NEWS, THOUGH...
THE SNITCHES THAT WASH UP ON THE RIVERBANKS...
...AND THE SHOOTINGS AND DISMEMBERMENTS. *YOU KNOW.*
WHAT ABOUT DISMEMBERMENT?
OH, NOTHING, HONEY. *GIRL TALK.*
RIGHT, THEN. ARE YOU READY TO GO?
MM-HMM!

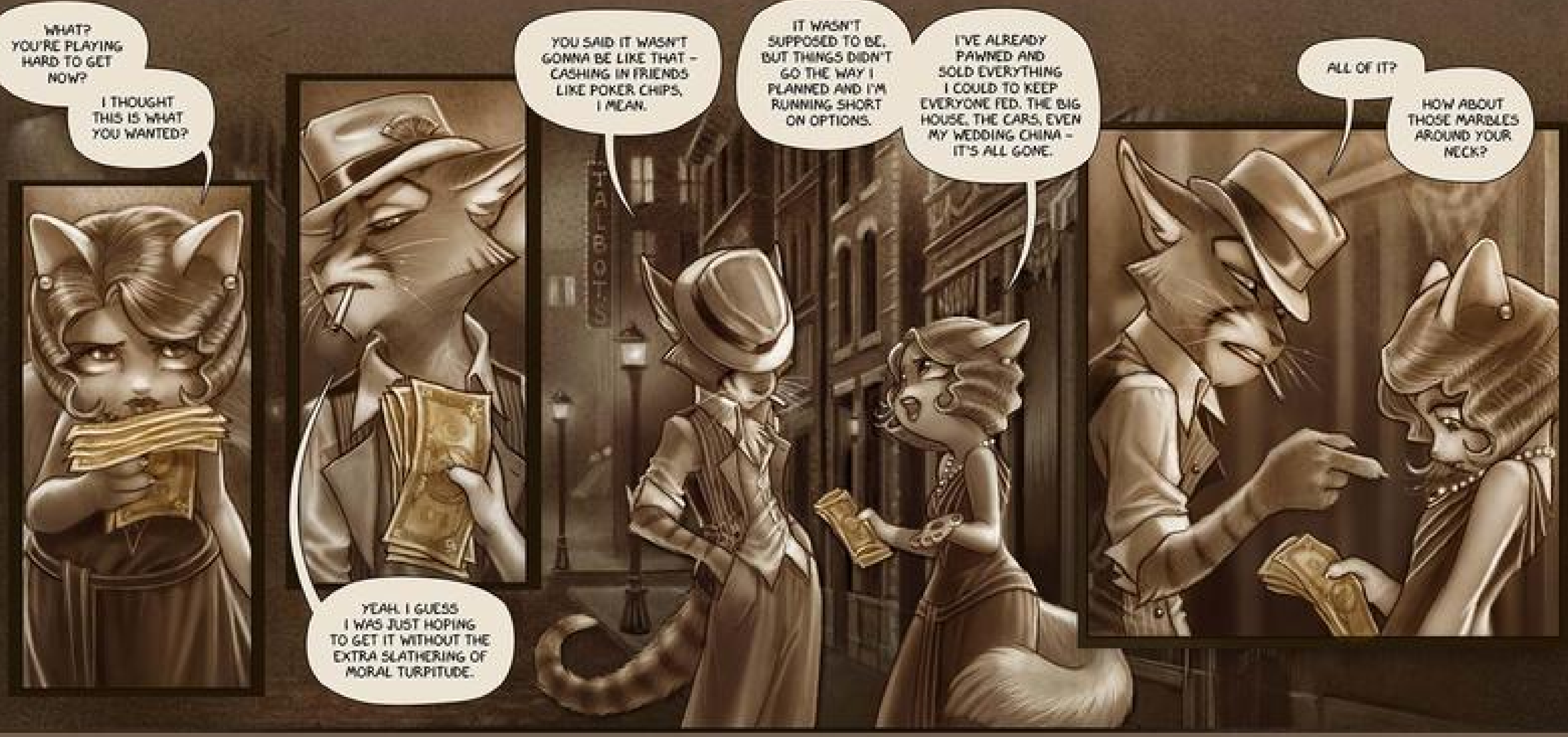

WICK.
MITZI.
GOODNIGHT.
SLAM
MAYBE I SHOULD SIT UP FRONT, MR. SABLE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I DON'T MIND PLAYING CHAUFFEUR FOR YOU TONIGHT.
WELL... IT'S A LITTLE BREEZY BACK HERE.
IN FACT, COULD WE STOP FOR COFFEE SOMEWHERE?
OH, UH, I... WELL...
I DON'T MEAN FOR THAT TO SOUND FORWARD.

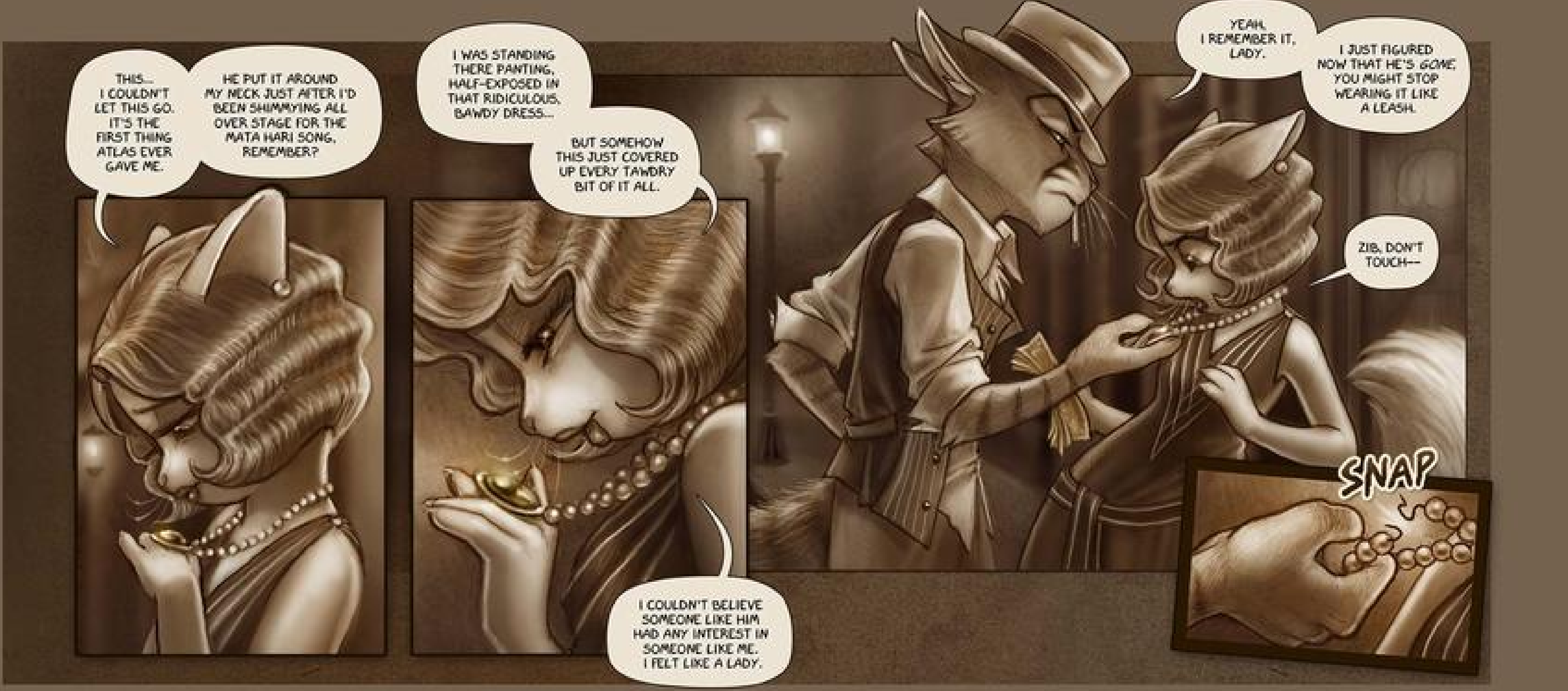

I JUST WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT YOUR NEW PARAMOUR BACK THERE.
IT'S REALLY NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT SHE'S, UM...
MITZI? YEAH, SHE'S... *SOMETHING.*
BUT I THINK WE'VE CALLED OFF THE PARADE.
OH, GOOD.
I MEAN, NOT *GOOD*... EXACTLY.
SHE JUST STRUCK ME AS ODD.
...LIKE THE SORT WHO, I DON'T KNOW, RIFLES THROUGH YOUR THINGS AND THEN THREATENS YOU WITH DISMEMBERMENT.
ANYWAY, NEVERMIND THE COFFEE.
YEAH, I HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO CATCH UP ON ANYWAY. I LET THE WHOLE DAY SLIP BY.
AND I'M SO TIRED I CAN'T SEE STRAIGHT.
HM. I'M SURE THAT'S AT LEAST *PART* OF THE REASON YOU CAN'T SEE STRAIGHT.
AND PART OF THE REASON YOU'RE DRIVING HALFWAY OFF THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD.
FWOOSH!!
NO, I WAS JUST SWERVING...
...TO AVOID...
...A DUCK?
DIDN'T YOU SEE THAT RECKLESS DUC BACK THERE
HEADLAMPS, MR. SABLE.
RIGHT. WHERE WOULD I BE WITHOUT MISS LACY?
CLICK
IN A DITCH, MR. SABLE.
HOPELESSLY TRAPPED IN THE TWISTED WRECKAGE OF YOUR CAR.
RHETORICA QUESTION.
MANGLED LIMBS.
YOU'RE RUINING THE SENTIMEN
PROBABLY ON FIRE.
I DON'T THINK WE NEED *ALL* THE GRUESOME DET—
WITH YOUR TAX RECORDS ALL OUT OF ORDER.
WELL, THAT MUCH IS TRUE. BUT IF YOU'RE PETITIONING FOR A RAISE, YOU SHOULD JUST AGREE WITH ME ABOUT THE DUCK.

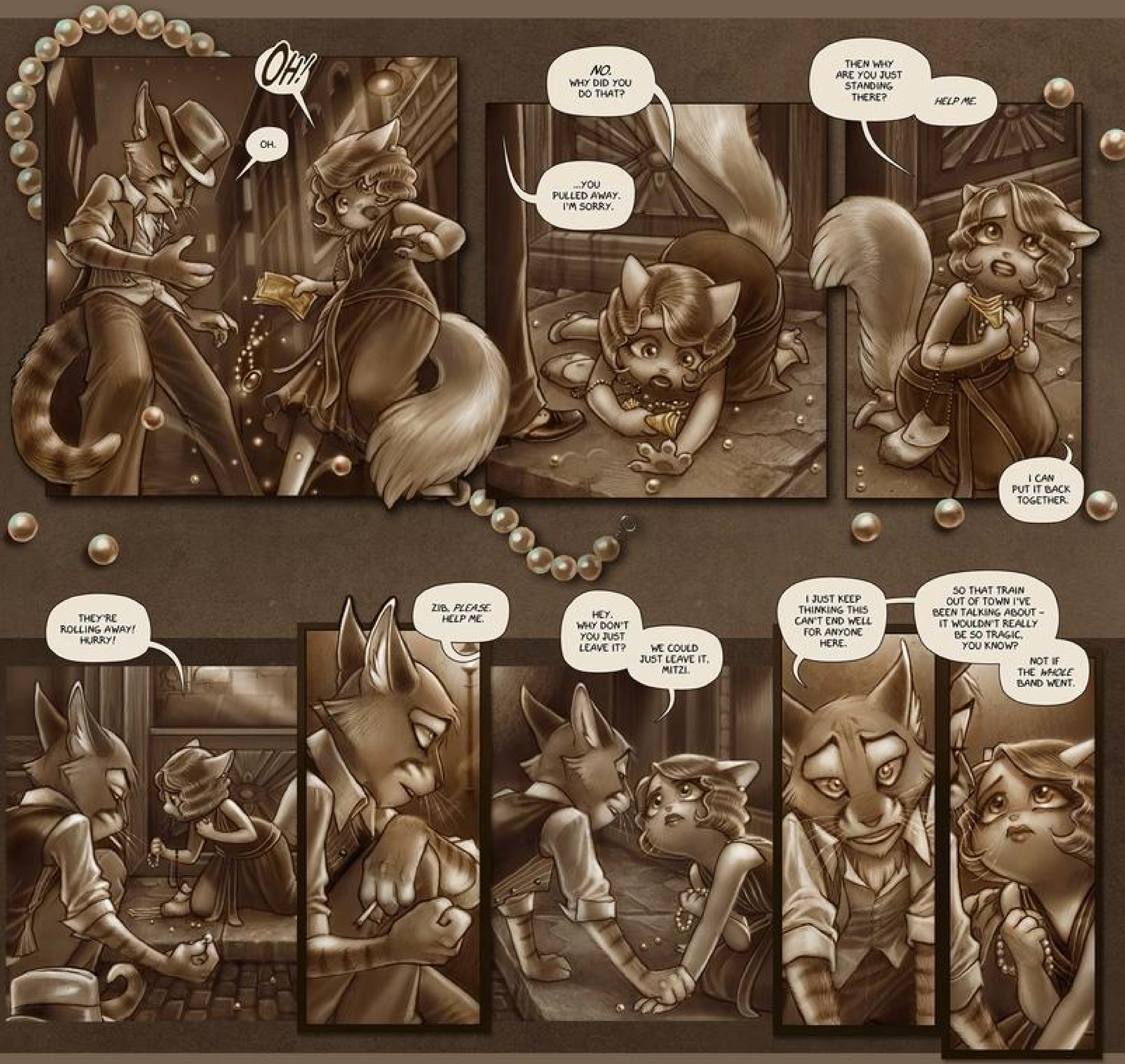

MY, THAT WAS A CHILLY DEPARTURE. NOT EVEN A GOODNIGHT KISS?
SIGH I'LL TAKE THE SMUGNESS AS A SIGN YOU APPRECIATE MY EFFORTS TO SAVE THIS SINKING SHIP.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP THIS EARLY ANYWAY? IT'S HARDLY EVEN DARK OUT.
COULDN'T SLEEP AFTER LAST NIGHT'S FIREWORKS... SO I FIGURED I'D PRACTICE SITTING AROUND LOOKING TROUBLED AND PENSIVE.
WELL, YOU'VE SUCCEEDED IN LOOKING LIKE A GRIMY DOORMAT.
ALL PART OF MY ARTISTS' MYSTIQUE I'M CULTIVATING.
YOU'RE *FERMENTING* IN ARTISTS' MYSTIQUE, ZIB.
...BUT SO LONG AS YOU'RE SEMI-CONSCIOUS, MAYBE YOU COULD COME WITH ME?
I HAVE TO GO TAKE CARE OF SOMETHING ON THE SLEAZY SIDE OF TOWN.
...AND I'M A LITTLE TIPSY.
WHAT'S THIS? MARTINI MITZI IS TIPSY?
HOW DID THAT COME TO PASS? I'VE SEEN YOU DRINK CATS TWICE YOUR SIZE UNDER A TABLE.
NOT THAT ONE. I WISH I HAD KNOWN HE WAS SOME KIND OF HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION BEFORE I STEPPED IN THE RING.
WELL, ALL RIGHT, THEN. FAR BE IT FOR ME TO REFUSE AN INVITATION TO SLEAZY TOWN.
THAT'S WHERE ALL THE SLEAZE HAPPENS.
...ALWAYS SUCH A GENTLEMAN.

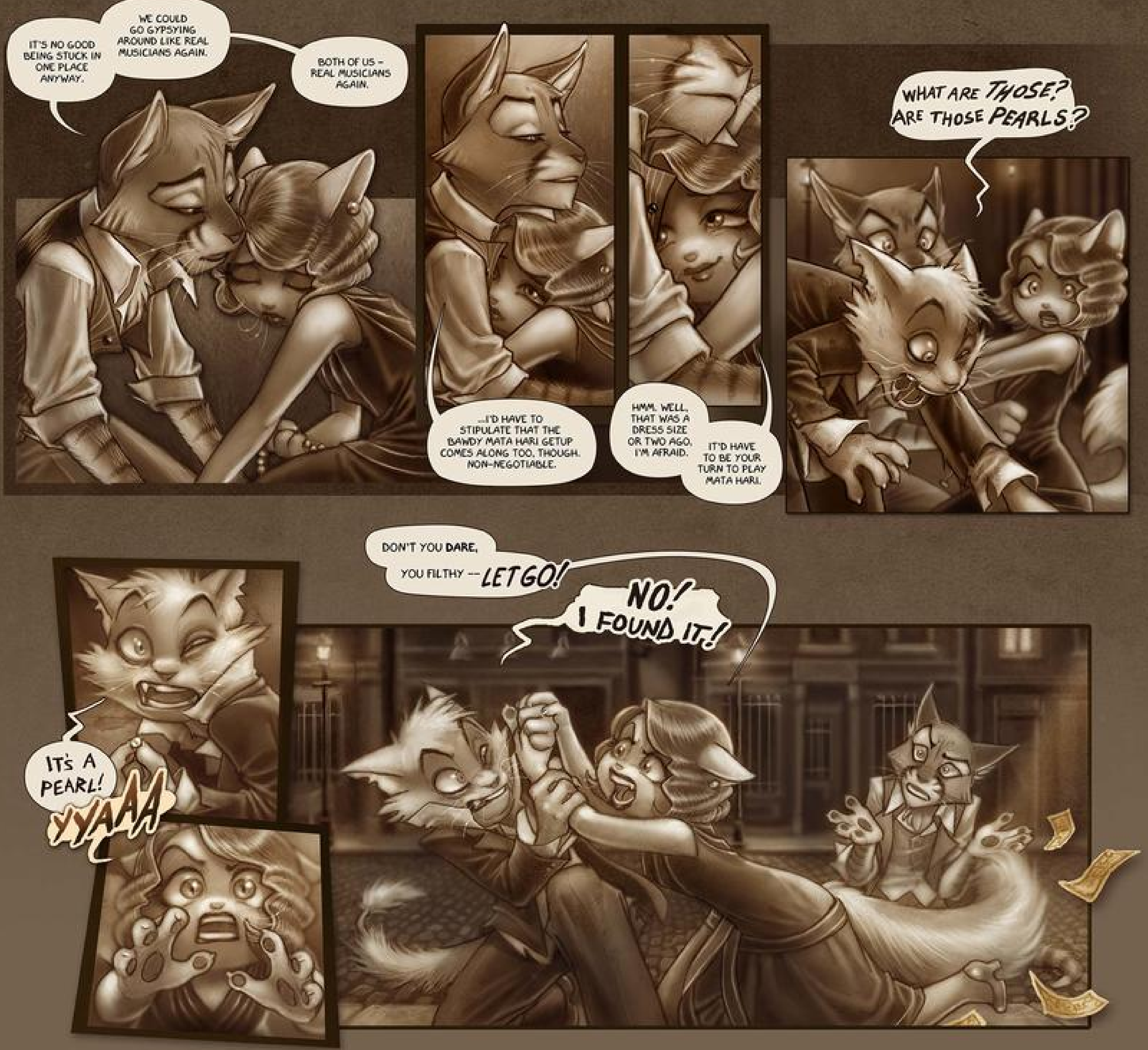

THIS ERRAND OF YOURS COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL YOU COULD WALK IN A STRAIGHT LINE AGAIN?
NO. IF I STOP NOW, MY SENSE OF SHAME MIGHT CATCH UP WITH ME.
I SEE. WELCOME TO THE RACE, THEN.
HEY! WHADD'YOU GOT?! GIMME WHATEVER YOU GOT OR I'LL --
UURRCH
WHOA! *HOLD ON! SETTLE DOWN. I* -- OH.
NO. YOU CAN'T ROB US WITH A CAN OPENER, VIRGIL.
BUT IT'S POINTY.
UHH, I'M NOT SURE IF THE SHADOWY AMBUSH ROUTINE IS WORKING OUT FOR YOU. MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST... GET YOURSELF A CAN.
I'D DONATE A NICKEL TO THE CAUSE IF I HAD TWO TO RUB TOGETHER, BUT I'M IN THE SAME RICKETY, IMPOVERISHED, OLD BOAT AS YOU, FRIEND.
LOAN
AS IT TURNS OUT, *CRIME NEVER PAYS.*
YES IT DOES.
...IF YOU'LL JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE.
"SABLE STONE AND QUARRY" – A BLANK CHECK?
HUH, ADDING FORGERY AND THEFT TO YOUR REPERTOIRE TONIGHT, ARE WE?
I'M ONLY TAKING A LITTLE – JUST ENOUGH TO SPARE YOU FROM STARVATION, YOU POOR THING.
...AND TO PAY THE REST OF THE BAND... AND FIX THE CAR...
AND PAY BACK THE TAXES ON THE PROPERTY, REPAIR THE BAR, RESTOCK THE ARMORY, AND BUY SOME RESPECTABLE HOOCH, OF COURSE...
OH, DON'T GIVE ME THAT LOOK AFTER YOU'VE PRODDED ME FOR YOUR WAGES.
I'LL REPAY IT ALL. EVENTUALLY.

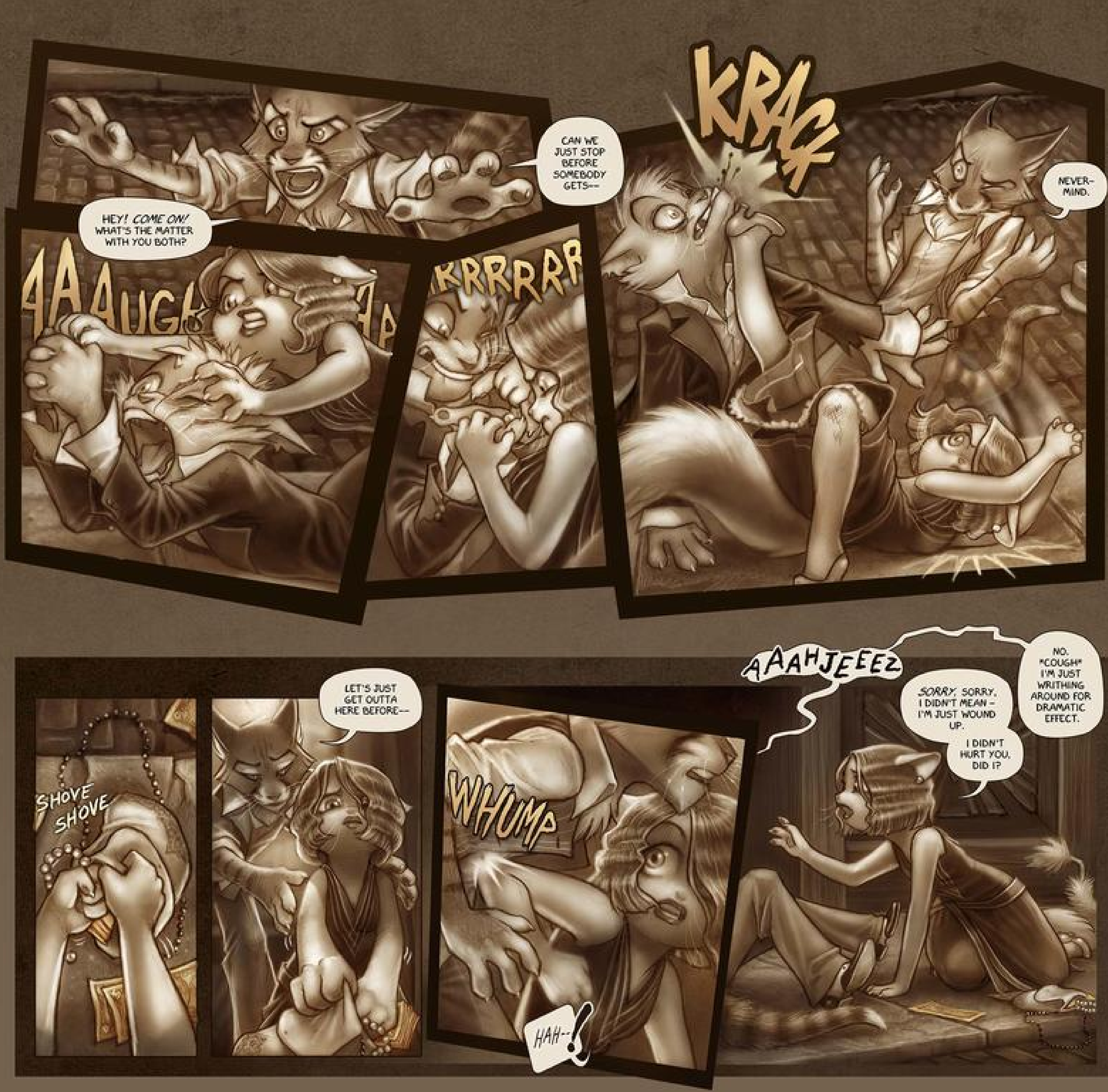

YEAH. SURE. WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO WHEN HE CATCHES YOUR LITTLE PAWS, MITZI — YOU KNOW, BEFORE *EVENTUALLY* ROLLS AROUND?
LOAN
JUNGERMAN
OFFICE
S.J. I
GOLD &
EXC
CHECK CASHING
WICK? DON'T WORRY. HE'S TOO NICE TO GO SEEKING REPRISALS.
HIIIII. YOU CASH CHECKS HERE, RIGHT?
COULD I TROUBLE YOU FOR A PEN?
OH, WHY, *THANK YOU.* MY HERO.
EXCUSE ME A MOMENT, WILL YOU, HANDSOME? I JUST NEED TO PUT MY LITTLE ENDORSEMENT ON THIS.
...OH, GOD. SO DRUNK.
SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE
SCRATCH SCRATCH SCRATCH
AAURGH! WHAT DOES HIS SIGNATURE LOOK LIKE??

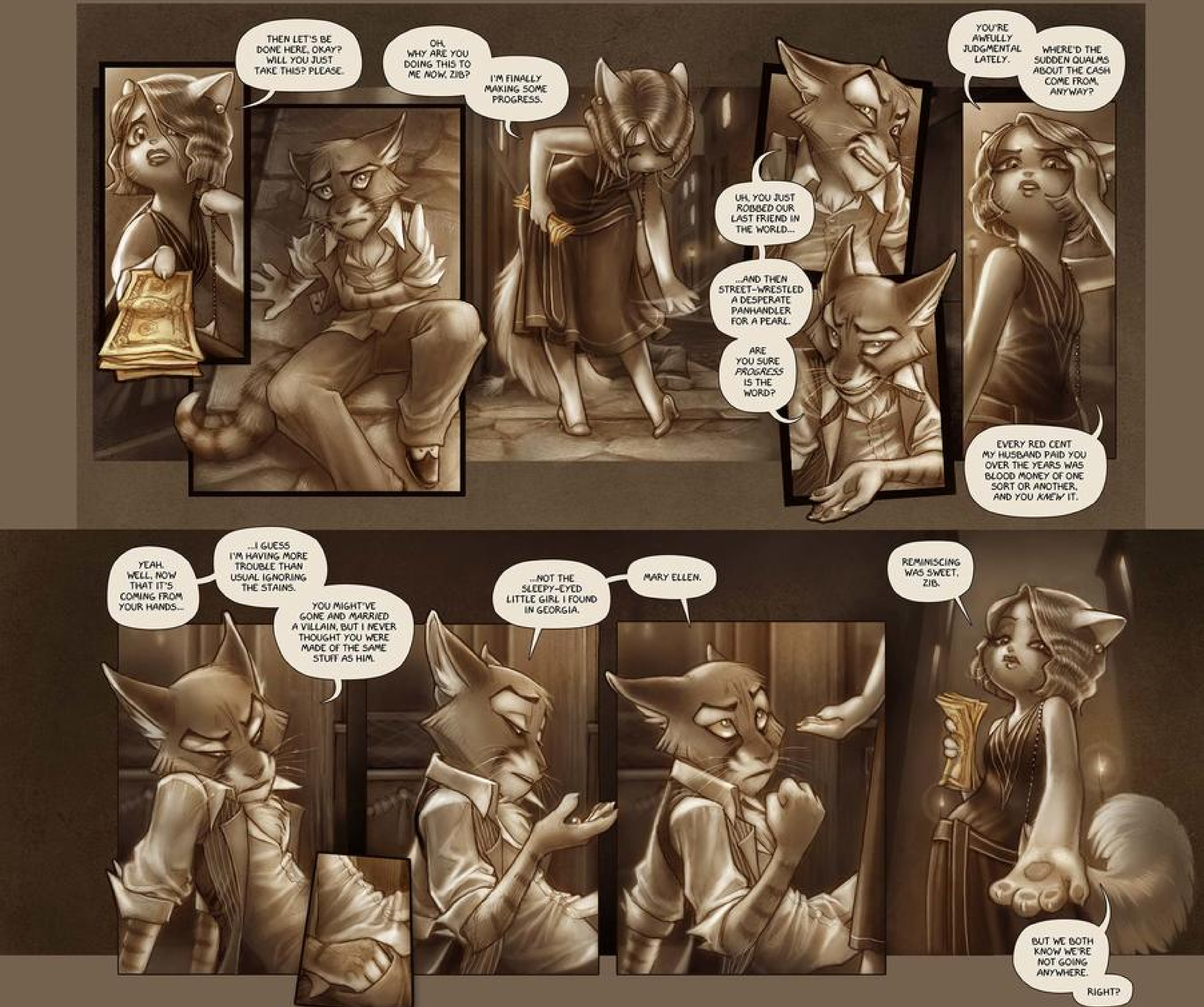

WHAT? YOU'RE PLAYING HARD TO GET NOW?
I THOUGHT THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED?
YEAH, I GUESS I WAS JUST HOPING TO GET IT WITHOUT THE EXTRA SLATHERING OF MORAL TURPITUDE.
YOU SAID IT WASN'T GONNA BE LIKE THAT – CASHING IN FRIENDS LIKE POKER CHIPS, I MEAN.
TALBOTS
IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE, BUT THINGS DIDN'T GO THE WAY I PLANNED AND I'M RUNNING SHORT ON OPTIONS.
I'VE ALREADY PAWNED AND SOLD EVERYTHING I COULD TO KEEP EVERYONE FED. THE BIG HOUSE, THE CARS, EVEN MY WEDDING CHINA – IT'S ALL GONE.
ALL OF IT?
HOW ABOUT THOSE MARBLES AROUND YOUR NECK?

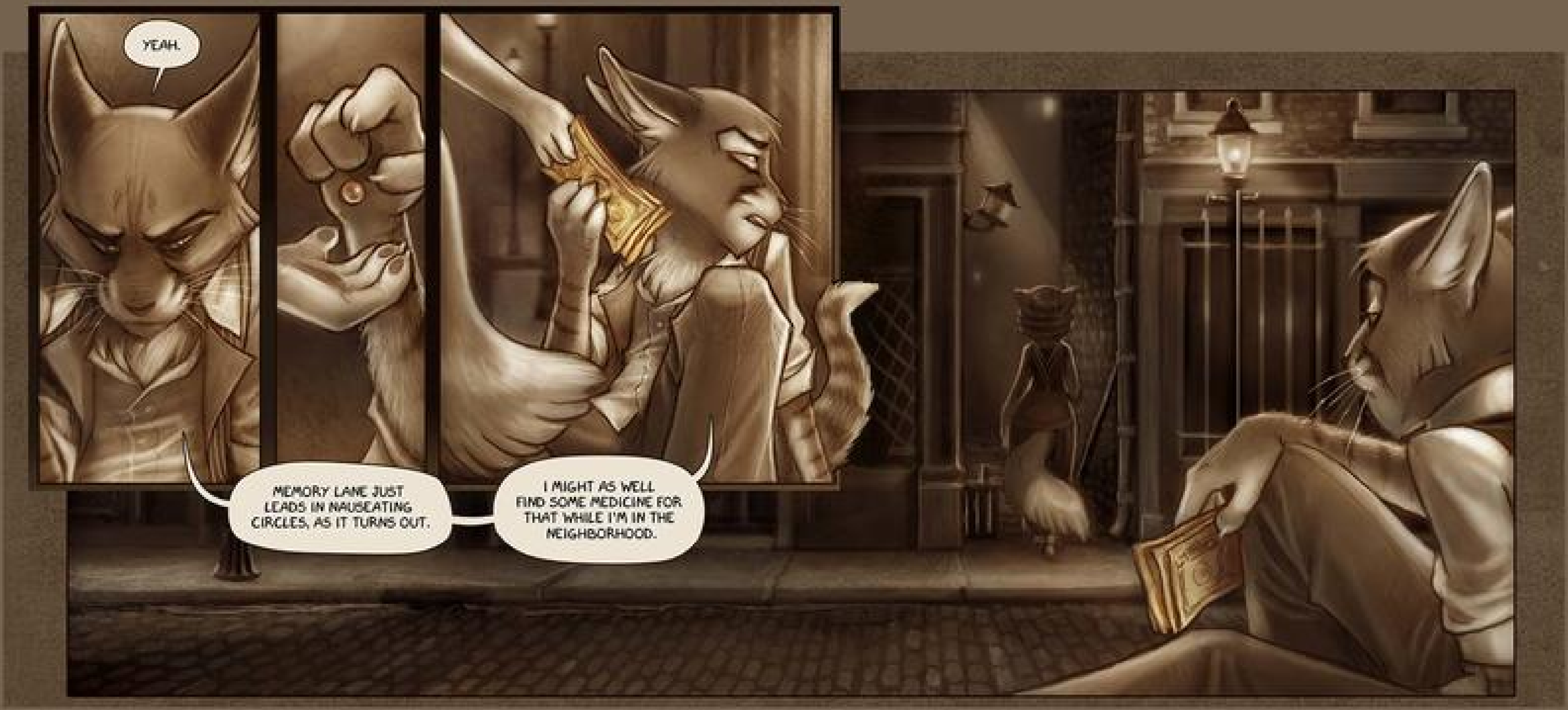

THIS... I COULDN'T LET THIS GO. IT'S THE FIRST THING ATLAS EVER GAVE ME.
HE PUT IT AROUND MY NECK JUST AFTER I'D BEEN SHIMMYING ALL OVER STAGE FOR THE MATA HARI SONG, REMEMBER?
I WAS STANDING THERE PANTING, HALF-EXPOSED IN THAT RIDICULOUS, BAWDY DRESS...
BUT SOMEHOW THIS JUST COVERED UP EVERY TAWDRY BIT OF IT ALL.
I COULDN'T BELIEVE SOMEONE LIKE HIM HAD ANY INTEREST IN SOMEONE LIKE ME. I FELT LIKE A LADY.
YEAH, I REMEMBER IT, LADY.
I JUST FIGURED NOW THAT HE'S *GONE*, YOU MIGHT STOP WEARING IT LIKE A LEASH.
ZIB, DON'T TOUCH—
SNAP

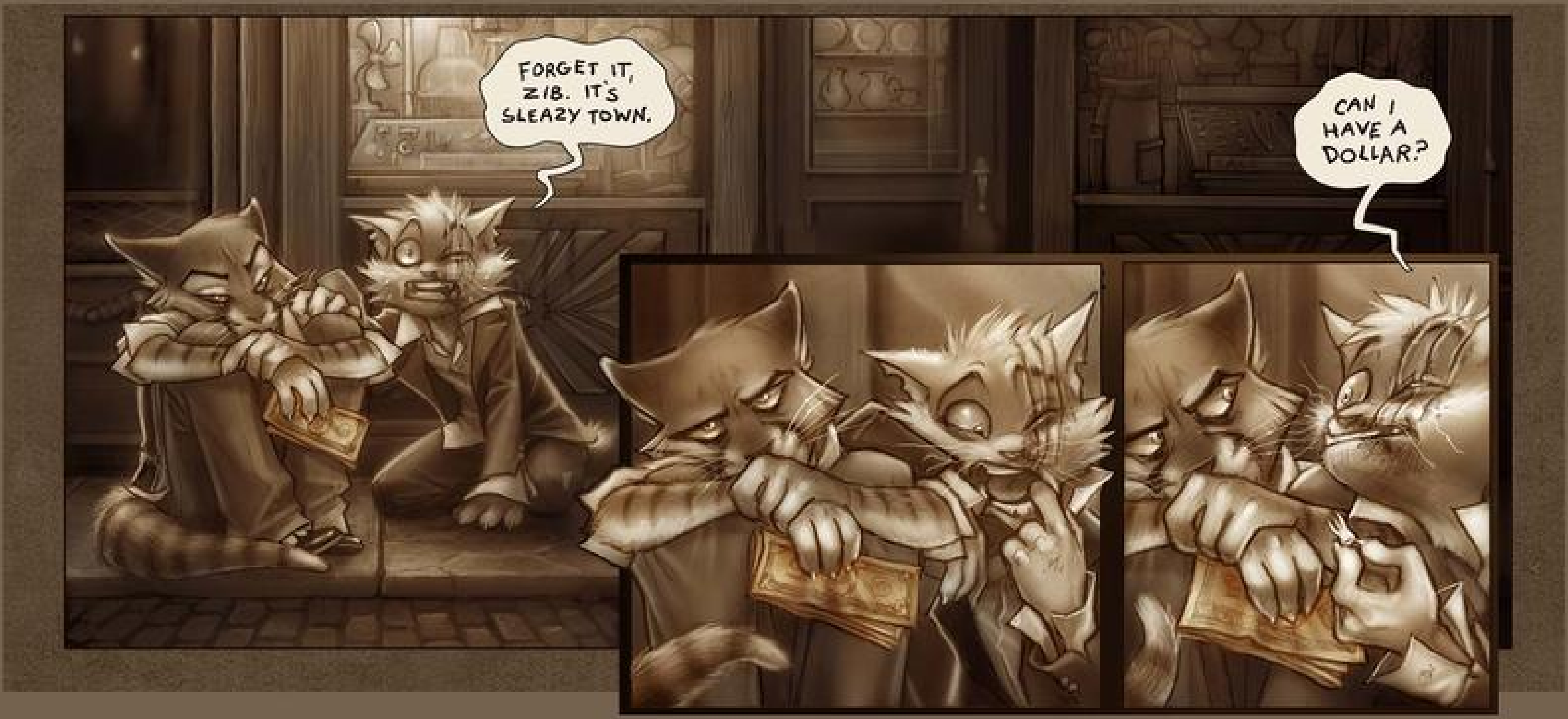

OH!
OH.
NO. WHY DID YOU DO THAT?
...YOU PULLED AWAY. I'M SORRY.
THEN WHY ARE YOU JUST STANDING THERE?
HELP ME.
I CAN PUT IT BACK TOGETHER.
THEY'RE ROLLING AWAY! HURRY!
ZIB, PLEASE. HELP ME.
HEY. WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE IT?
WE COULD JUST LEAVE IT, MITZI.
I JUST KEEP THINKING THIS CAN'T END WELL FOR ANYONE HERE.
SO THAT TRAIN OUT OF TOWN I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT – IT WOULDN'T REALLY BE SO TRAGIC, YOU KNOW?
NOT IF THE WHOLE BAND WENT.

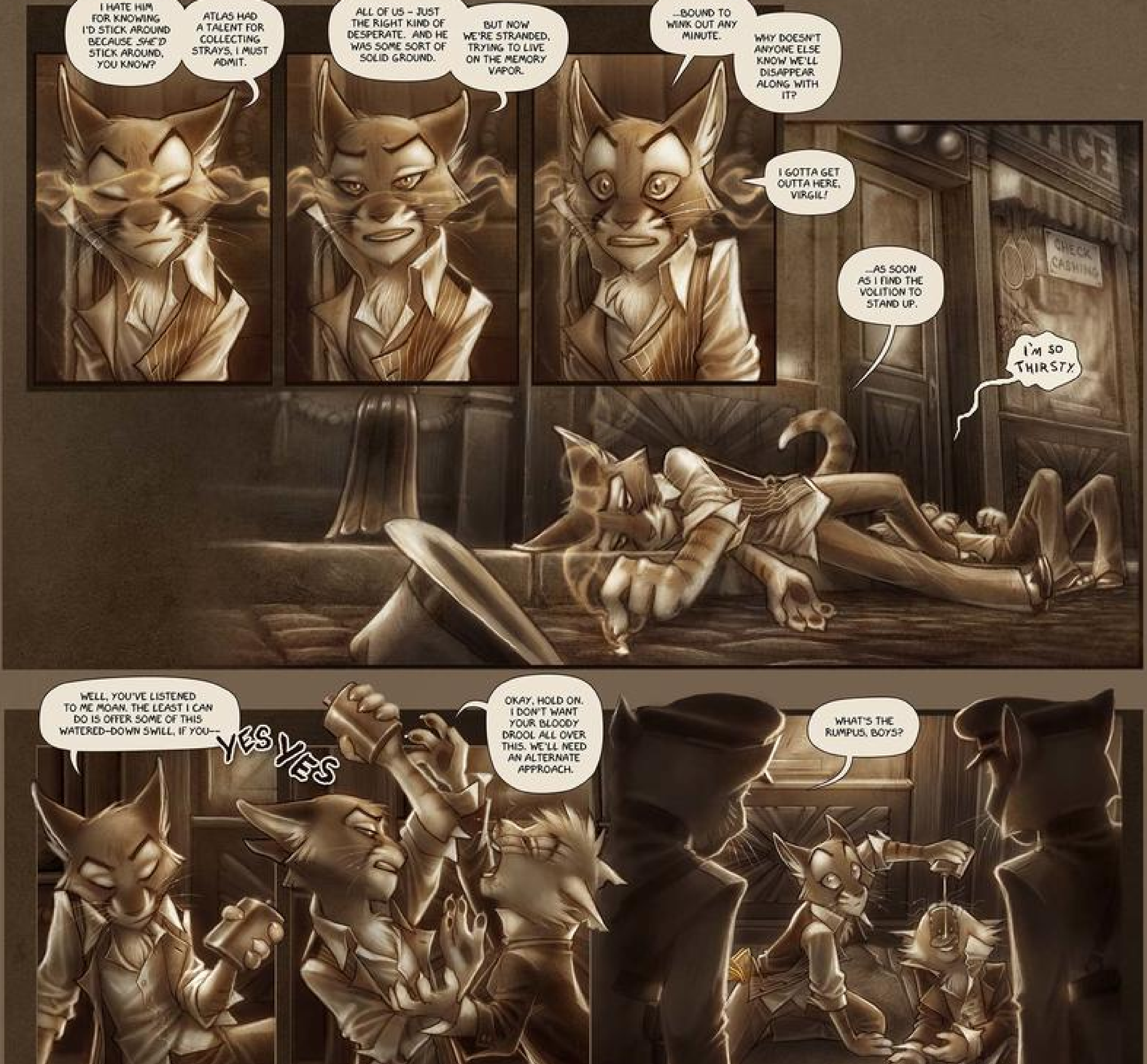

IT'S NO GOOD BEING STUCK IN ONE PLACE ANYWAY.
WE COULD GO GYPSYING AROUND LIKE REAL MUSICIANS AGAIN.
BOTH OF US – REAL MUSICIANS AGAIN.
...I'D HAVE TO STIPULATE THAT THE BAWDY MATA HARI GETUP COMES ALONG TOO, THOUGH. NON-NEGOTIABLE.
HMM. WELL, THAT WAS A DRESS SIZE OR TWO AGO, I'M AFRAID.
IT'D HAVE TO BE YOUR TURN TO PLAY MATA HARI.
WHAT ARE THOSE? ARE THOSE PEARLS?
IT'S A PEARL!
YYAAA
DON'T YOU DARE, YOU FILTHY -- LET GO!
NO! I FOUND IT!

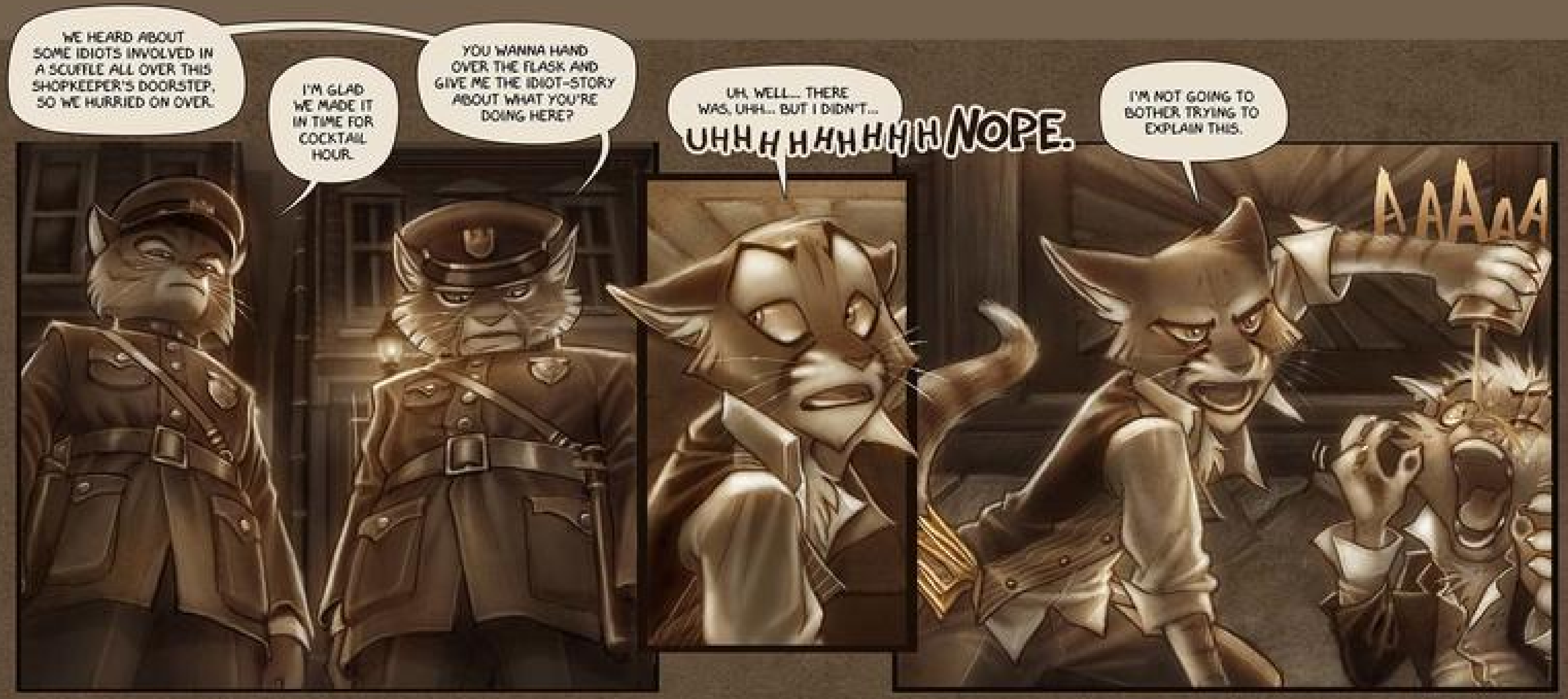

HEY! *COME ON!* WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU BOTH?
CAN WE JUST STOP BEFORE SOMEBODY GETS--
AAAUGH
AR
RRRRRR
KRACK
NEVER-MIND.
SHOVE SHOVE
LET'S JUST GET OUTTA HERE BEFORE--
WHUMP
HAH--!
AAAHJEEEZ
SORRY, SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN - I'M JUST WOUND UP.
I DIDN'T HURT YOU, DID I?
NO. *COUGH* I'M JUST WRITHING AROUND FOR DRAMATIC EFFECT.

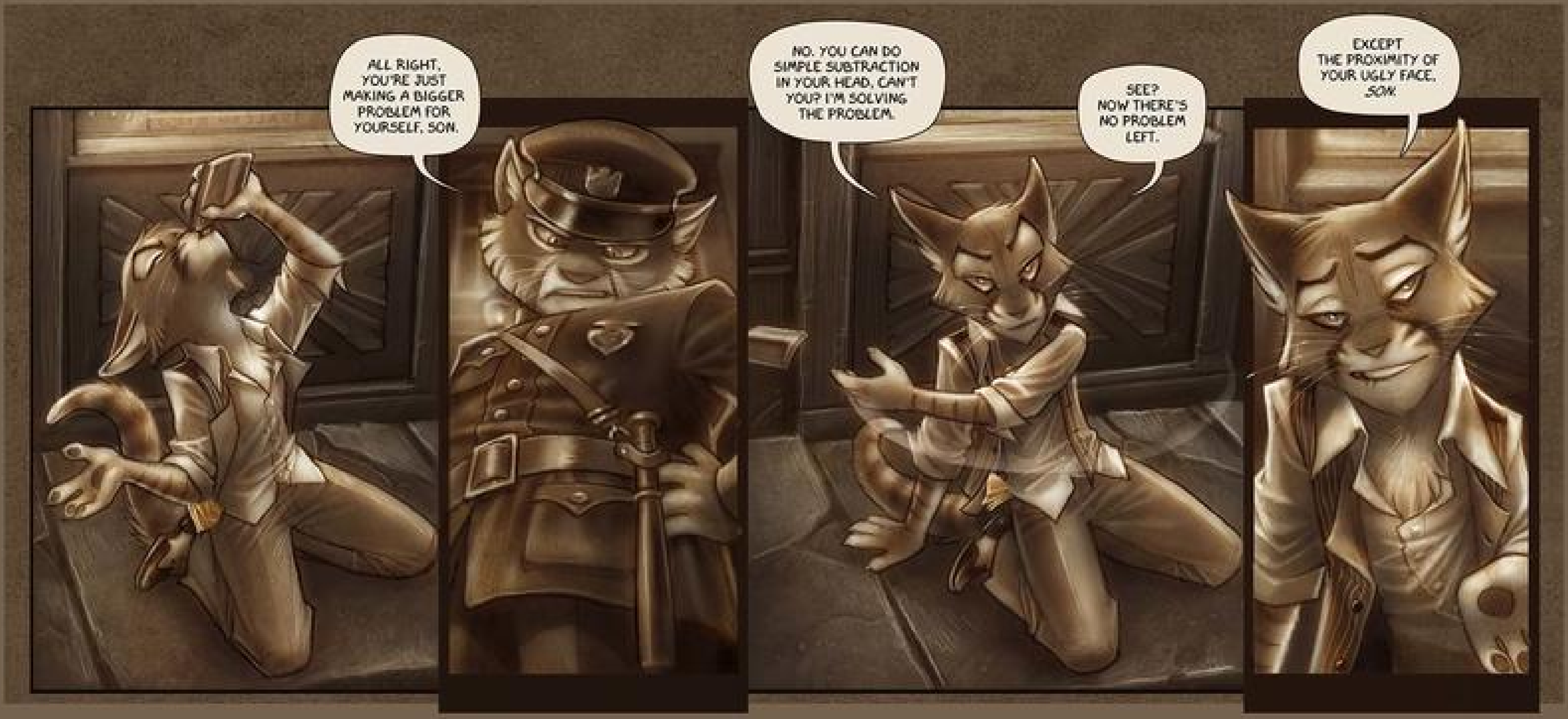

THEN LET'S BE DONE HERE, OKAY? WILL YOU JUST TAKE THIS? PLEASE.
OH, WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME *NOW*, ZIB?
I'M FINALLY MAKING SOME PROGRESS.
UH, YOU JUST *ROBBED* OUR LAST FRIEND IN THE WORLD...
...AND THEN STREET-WRESTLED A DESPERATE PANHANDLER FOR A PEARL.
ARE YOU SURE *PROGRESS* IS THE WORD?
YOU'RE AWFULLY JUDGMENTAL LATELY.
WHERE'D THE SUDDEN QUALMS ABOUT THE CASH COME FROM, ANYWAY?
EVERY RED CENT MY HUSBAND PAID YOU OVER THE YEARS WAS BLOOD MONEY OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER, AND YOU *KNEW* IT.
YEAH. WELL, NOW THAT IT'S COMING FROM YOUR HANDS...
...I GUESS I'M HAVING MORE TROUBLE THAN USUAL IGNORING THE STAINS.
YOU MIGHT'VE GONE AND *MARRIED* A VILLAIN, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WERE MADE OF THE SAME STUFF AS HIM.
...NOT THE SLEEPY-EYED LITTLE GIRL I FOUND IN GEORGIA.
MARY ELLEN.
REMINISCING WAS SWEET, ZIB.
BUT WE BOTH KNOW WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
RIGHT?

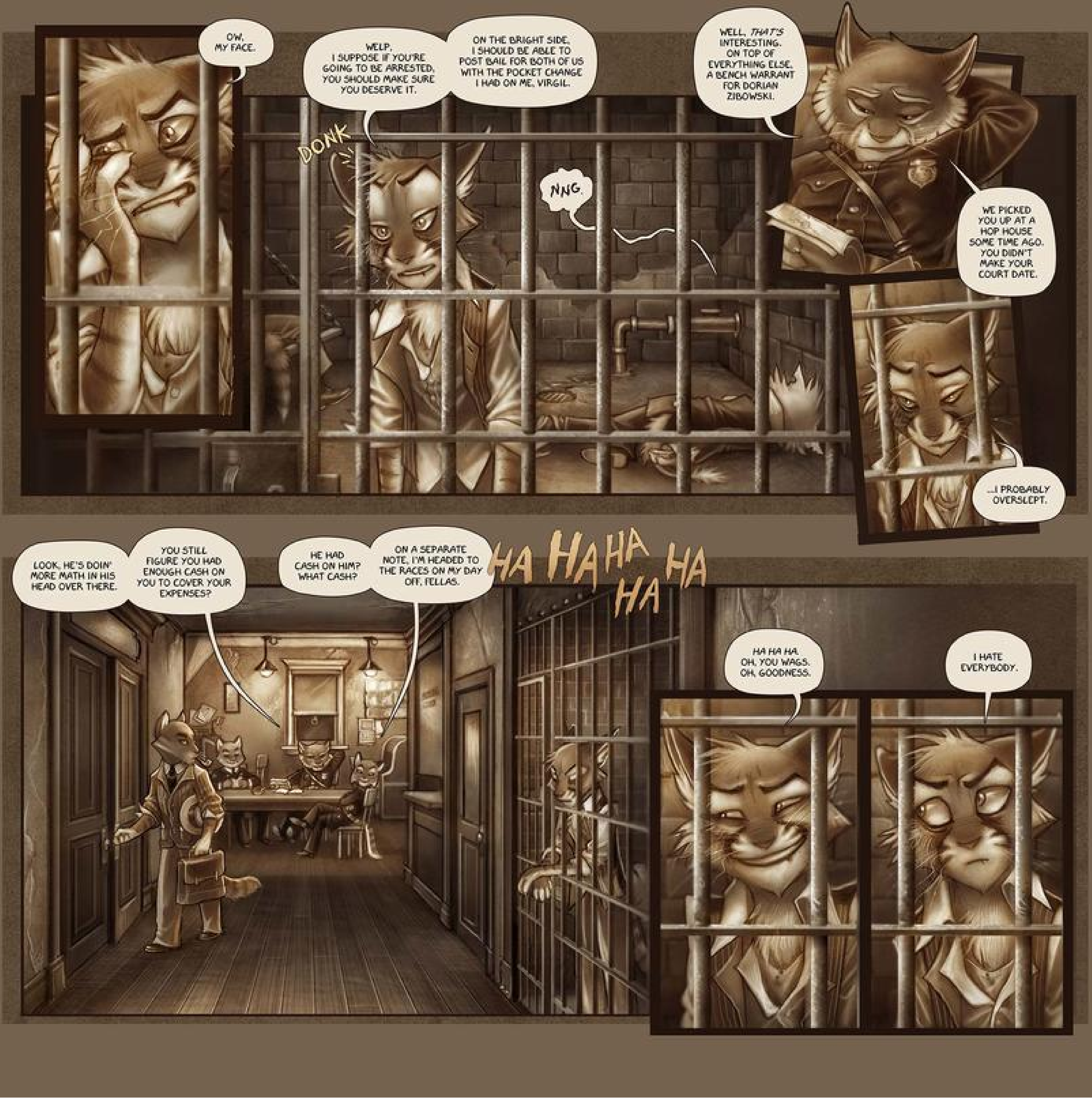

YEAH.
MEMORY LANE JUST LEADS IN NAUSEATING CIRCLES, AS IT TURNS OUT.
I MIGHT AS WELL FIND SOME MEDICINE FOR THAT WHILE I'M IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

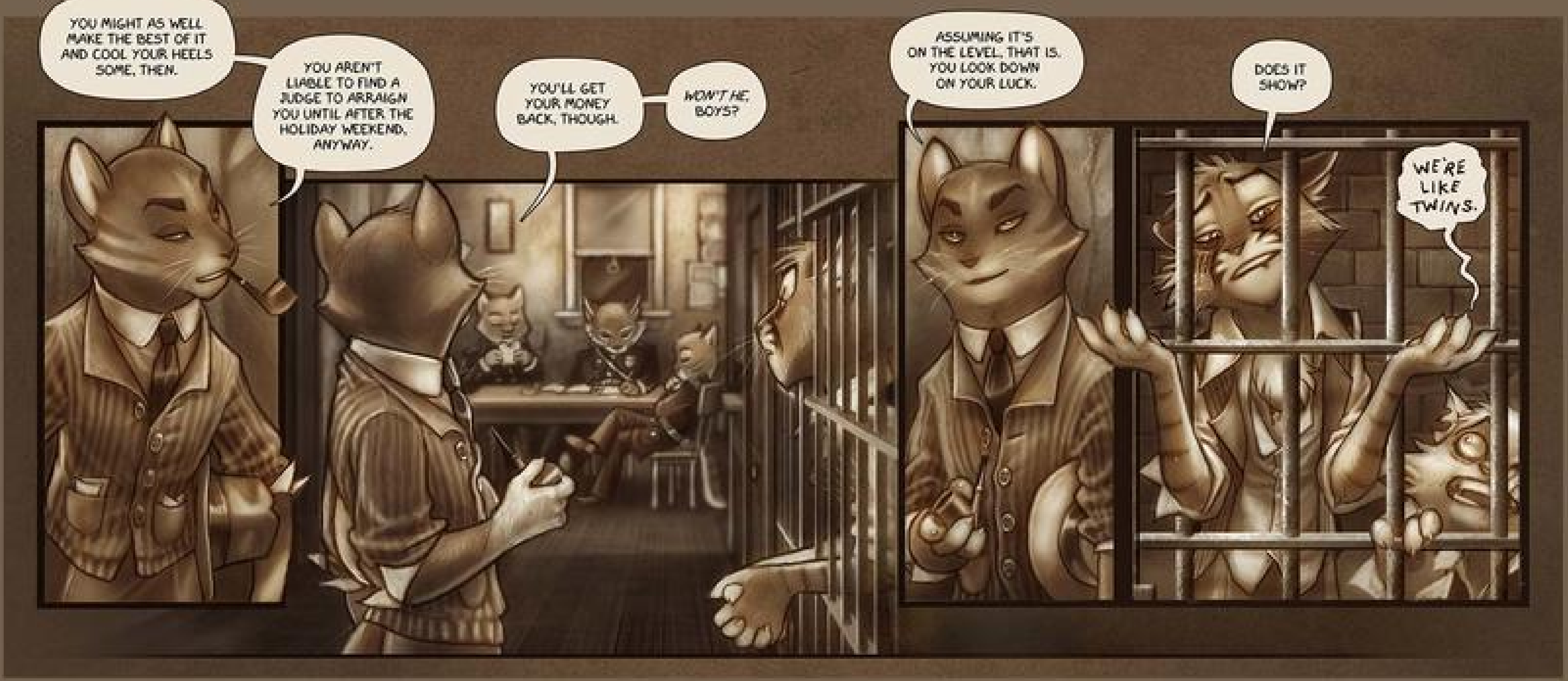

FORGET IT, ZIB. IT'S SLEAZY TOWN.
CAN I HAVE A DOLLAR?

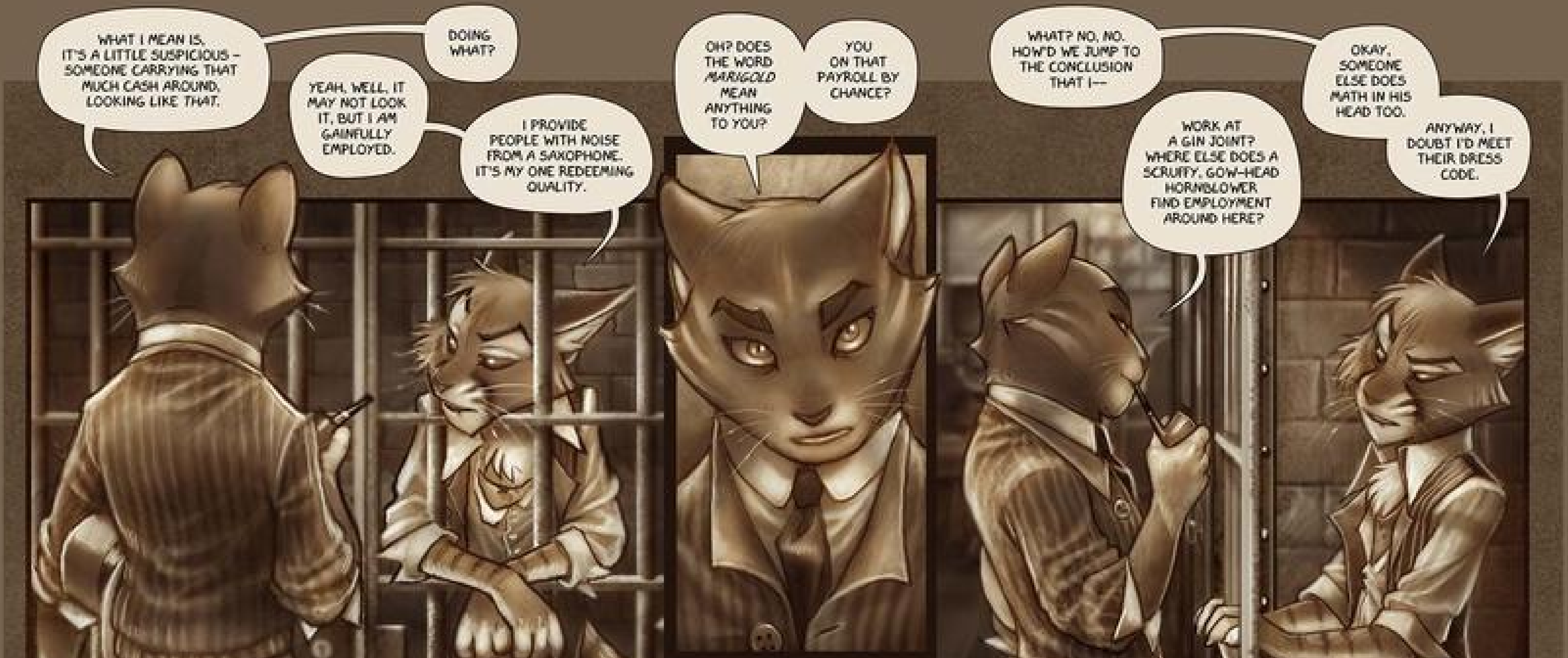

I HATE HIM FOR KNOWING I'D STICK AROUND BECAUSE *SHE'D* STICK AROUND, YOU KNOW?
ATLAS HAD A TALENT FOR COLLECTING STRAYS, I MUST ADMIT.
ALL OF US – JUST THE RIGHT KIND OF DESPERATE. AND HE WAS SOME SORT OF SOLID GROUND.
BUT NOW WE'RE STRANDED, TRYING TO LIVE ON THE MEMORY VAPOR.
...BOUND TO WINK OUT ANY MINUTE.
WHY DOESN'T ANYONE ELSE KNOW WE'LL DISAPPEAR ALONG WITH IT?
ICE
I GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE, VIRGIL!
CHECK CASHING
...AS SOON AS I FIND THE VOLITION TO STAND UP.
I'M SO THIRSTY.
WELL, YOU'VE LISTENED TO ME MOAN. THE LEAST I CAN DO IS OFFER SOME OF THIS WATERED-DOWN SWILL, IF YOU--
YES YES
OKAY, HOLD ON. I DON'T WANT YOUR BLOODY DROOL ALL OVER THIS. WE'LL NEED AN ALTERNATE APPROACH.
WHAT'S THE RUMPUS, BOYS?

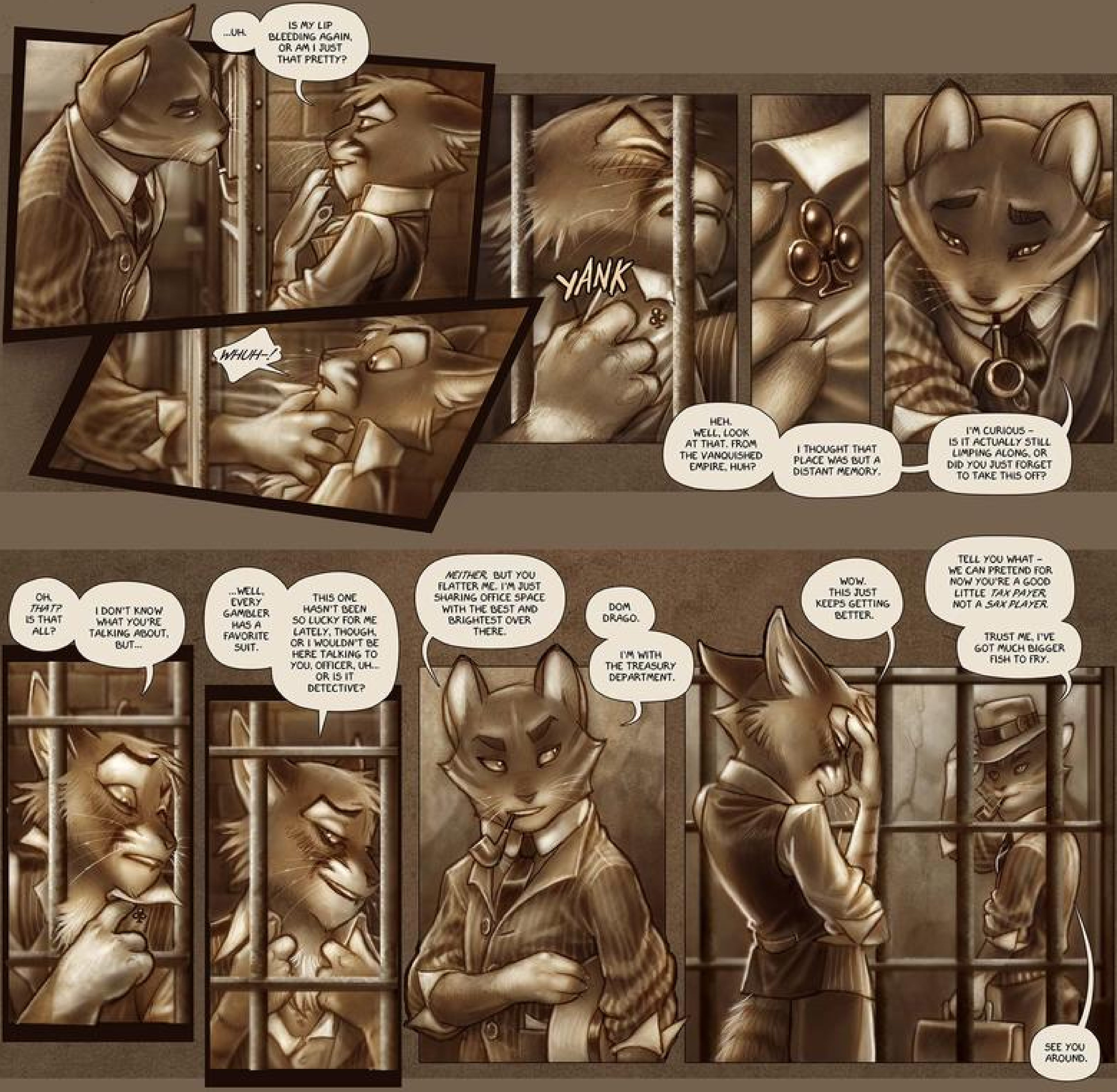

WE HEARD ABOUT SOME IDIOTS INVOLVED IN A SCUFFLE ALL OVER THIS SHOPKEEPER'S DOORSTEP, SO WE HURRIED ON OVER.
I'M GLAD WE MADE IT IN TIME FOR COCKTAIL HOUR.
YOU WANNA HAND OVER THE FLASK AND GIVE ME THE IDIOT-STORY ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE?
UH, WELL... THERE WAS, UHH... BUT I DIDN'T...
UHHHHHHHHHHNOPE.
I'M NOT GOING TO BOTHER TRYING TO EXPLAIN THIS.
AAAAA

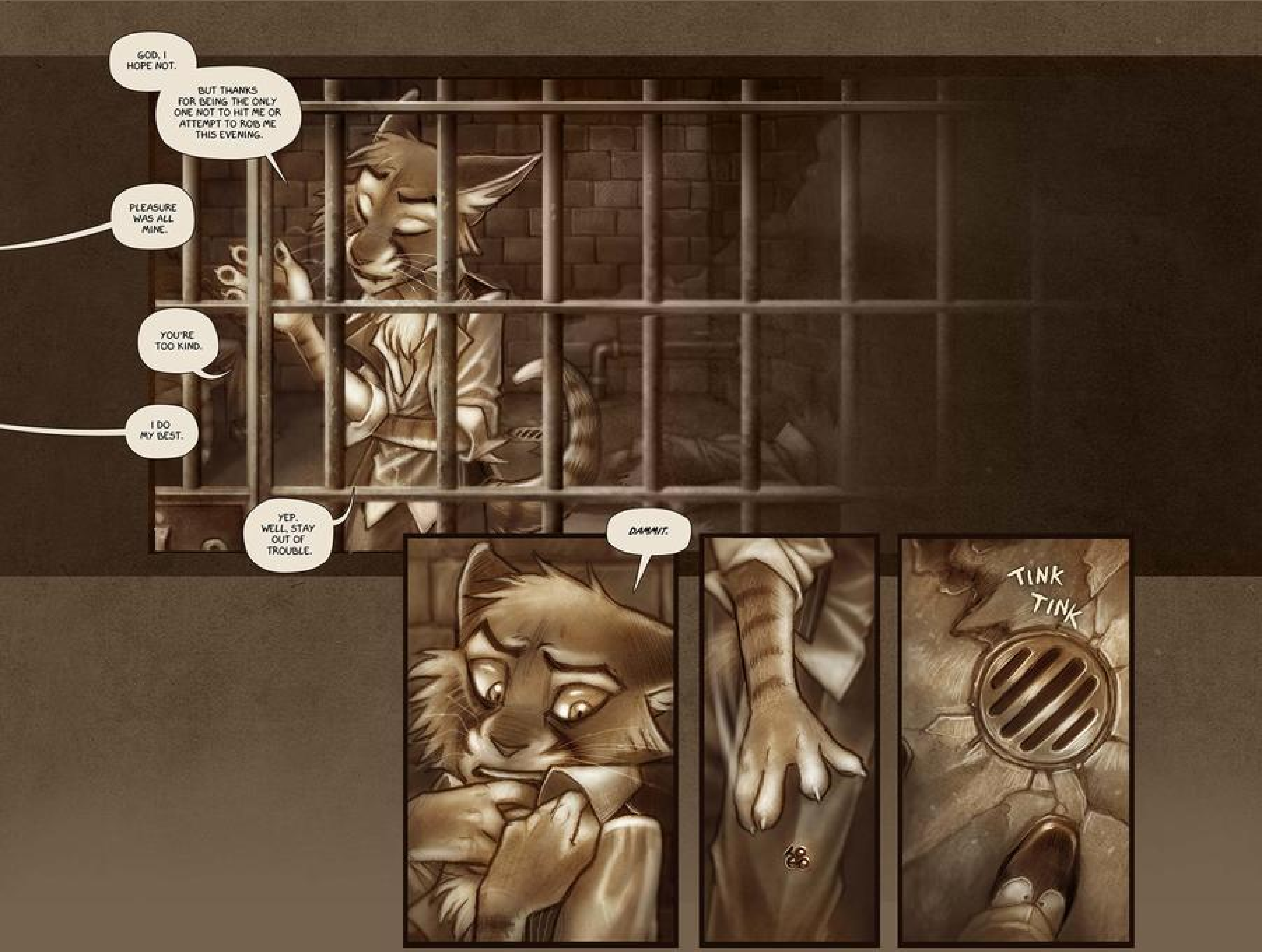

ALL RIGHT, YOU'RE JUST MAKING A BIGGER PROBLEM FOR YOURSELF, SON.
NO. YOU CAN DO SIMPLE SUBTRACTION IN YOUR HEAD, CAN'T YOU? I'M SOLVING THE PROBLEM.
SEE? NOW THERE'S NO PROBLEM LEFT.
EXCEPT THE PROXIMITY OF YOUR UGLY FACE, *SON*.

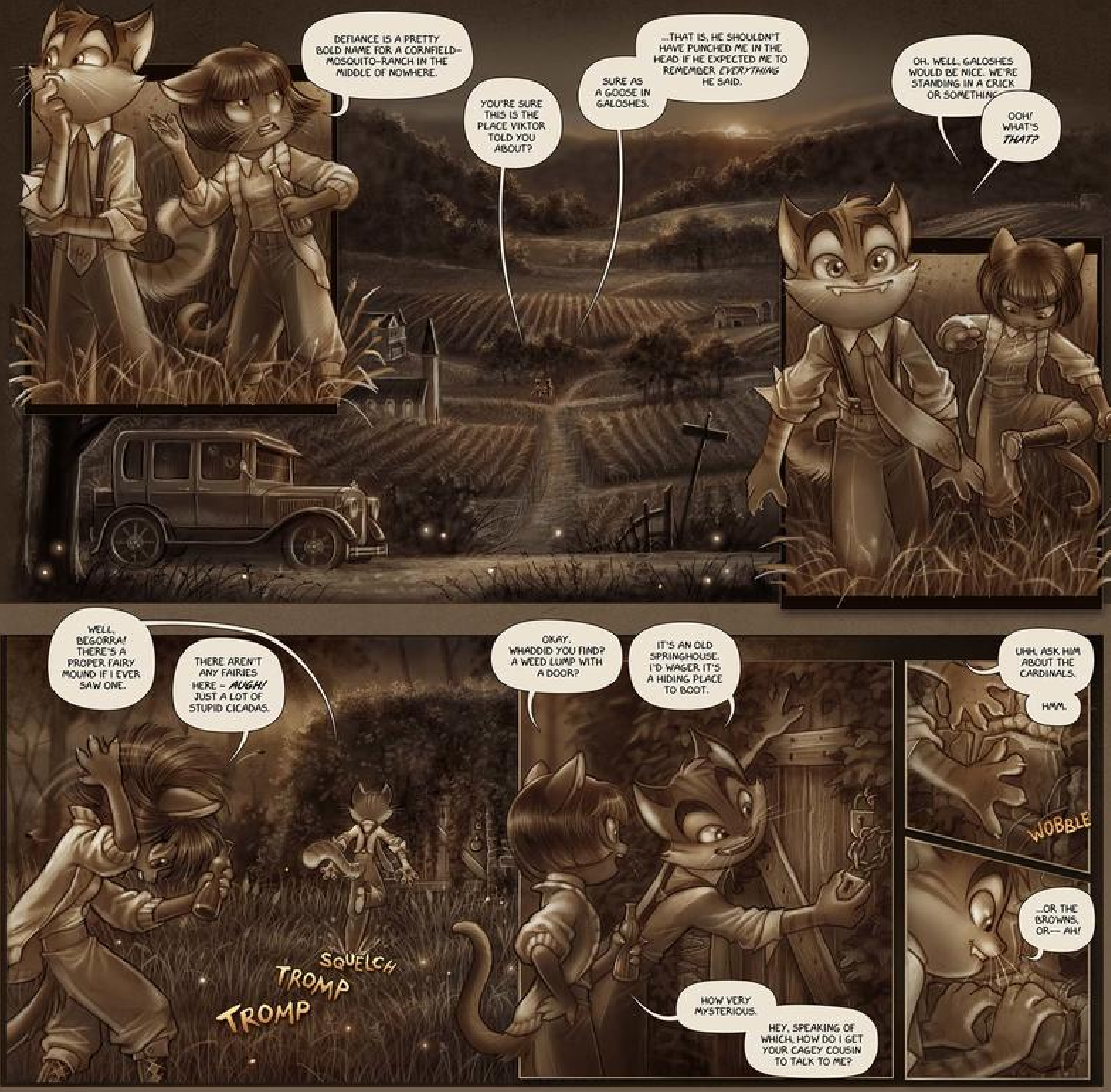

OW, MY FACE.
WELP, I SUPPOSE IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE ARRESTED, YOU SHOULD MAKE SURE YOU DESERVE IT.
DONK
ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO POST BAIL FOR BOTH OF US WITH THE POCKET CHANGE I HAD ON ME, VIRGIL.
NNG.
WELL, *THAT'S* INTERESTING. ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, A BENCH WARRANT FOR DORIAN ZIBOWSKI.
WE PICKED YOU UP AT A HOP HOUSE SOME TIME AGO. YOU DIDN'T MAKE YOUR COURT DATE.
...I PROBABLY OVERSLEPT.
LOOK, HE'S DOIN' MORE MATH IN HIS HEAD OVER THERE.
YOU STILL FIGURE YOU HAD ENOUGH CASH ON YOU TO COVER YOUR EXPENSES?
HE HAD CASH ON HIM? WHAT CASH?
ON A SEPARATE NOTE, I'M HEADED TO THE RACES ON MY DAY OFF, FELLAS.
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA. OH, YOU WAGS. OH, GOODNESS.
I HATE EVERYBODY.

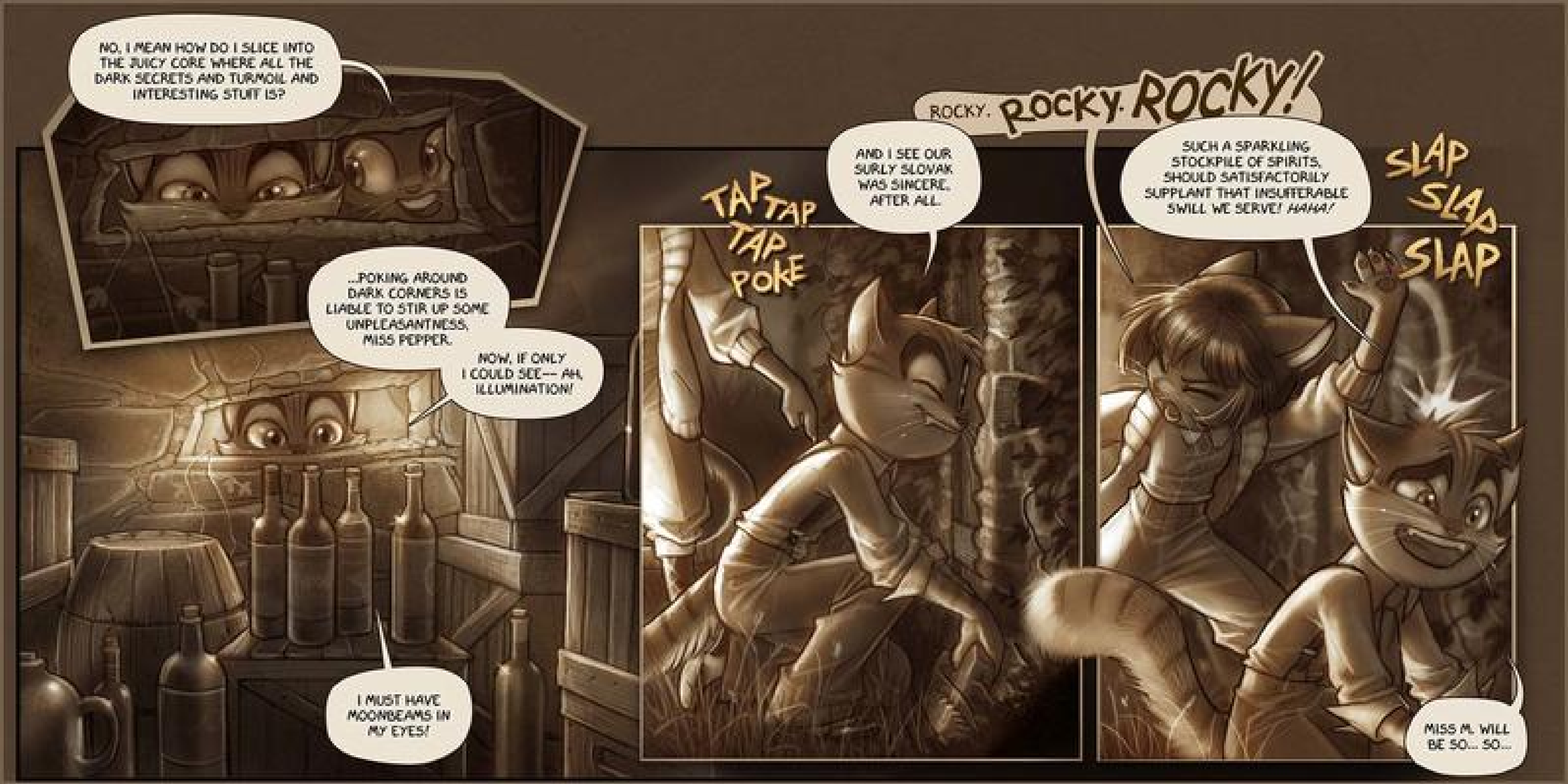

YOU MIGHT AS WELL MAKE THE BEST OF IT AND COOL YOUR HEELS SOME, THEN.
YOU AREN'T LIABLE TO FIND A JUDGE TO *ARRAIGN* YOU UNTIL AFTER THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND, ANYWAY.
YOU'LL GET YOUR MONEY BACK, THOUGH.
WON'T HE, BOYS?
ASSUMING IT'S ON THE LEVEL, THAT IS. YOU LOOK DOWN ON YOUR LUCK.
DOES IT SHOW?
WE'RE LIKE TWINS.

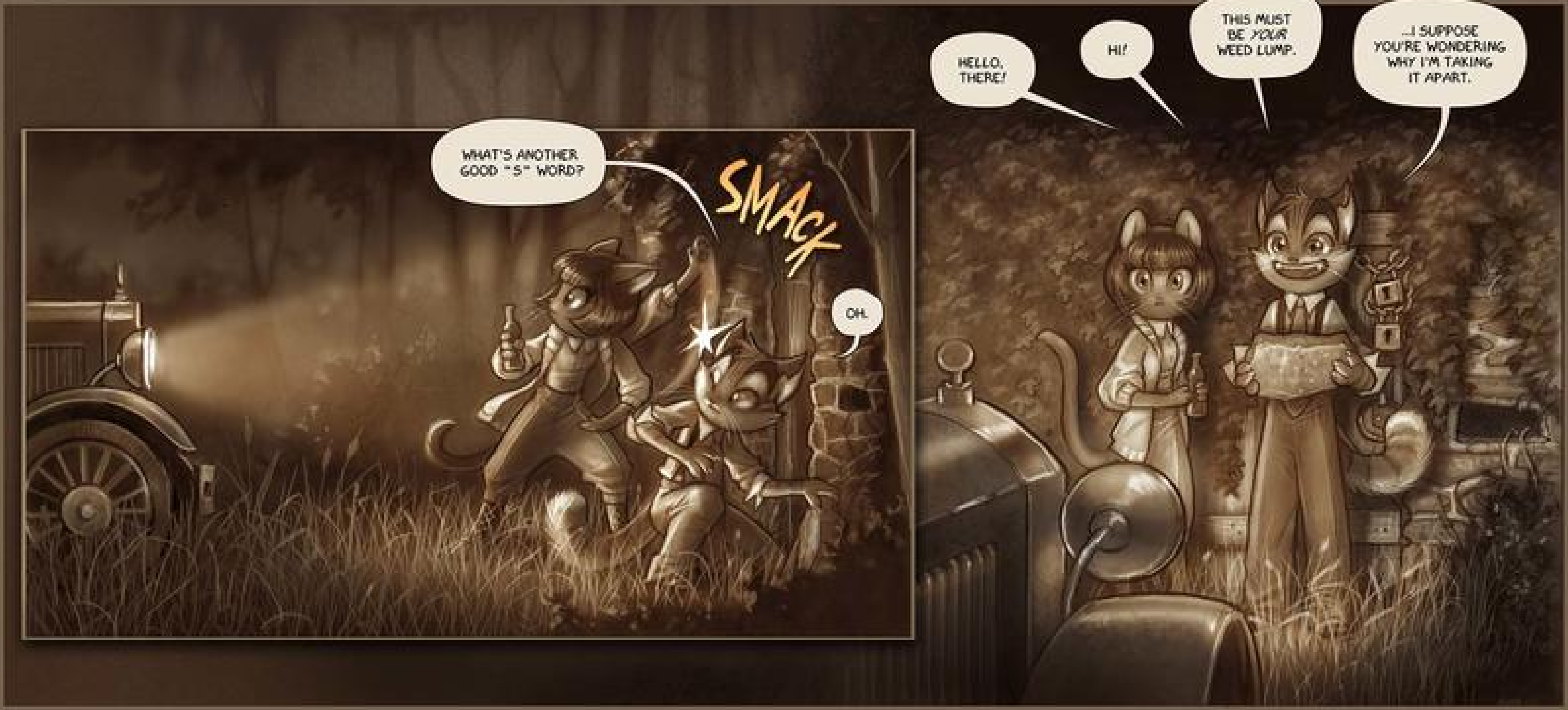

WHAT I MEAN IS, IT'S A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS – SOMEONE CARRYING THAT MUCH CASH AROUND, LOOKING LIKE THAT.
DOING WHAT?
YEAH, WELL, IT MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I AM GAINFULLY EMPLOYED.
I PROVIDE PEOPLE WITH NOISE FROM A SAXOPHONE. IT'S MY ONE REDEEMING QUALITY.
OH? DOES THE WORD *MARIGOLD* MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
YOU ON THAT PAYROLL BY CHANCE?
WHAT? NO, NO. HOW'D WE JUMP TO THE CONCLUSION THAT I--
WORK AT A GIN JOINT? WHERE ELSE DOES A SCRUFFY, GOW-HEAD HORNBLOWER FIND EMPLOYMENT AROUND HERE?
OKAY, SOMEONE ELSE DOES MATH IN HIS HEAD TOO.
ANYWAY, I DOUBT I'D MEET THEIR DRESS CODE.

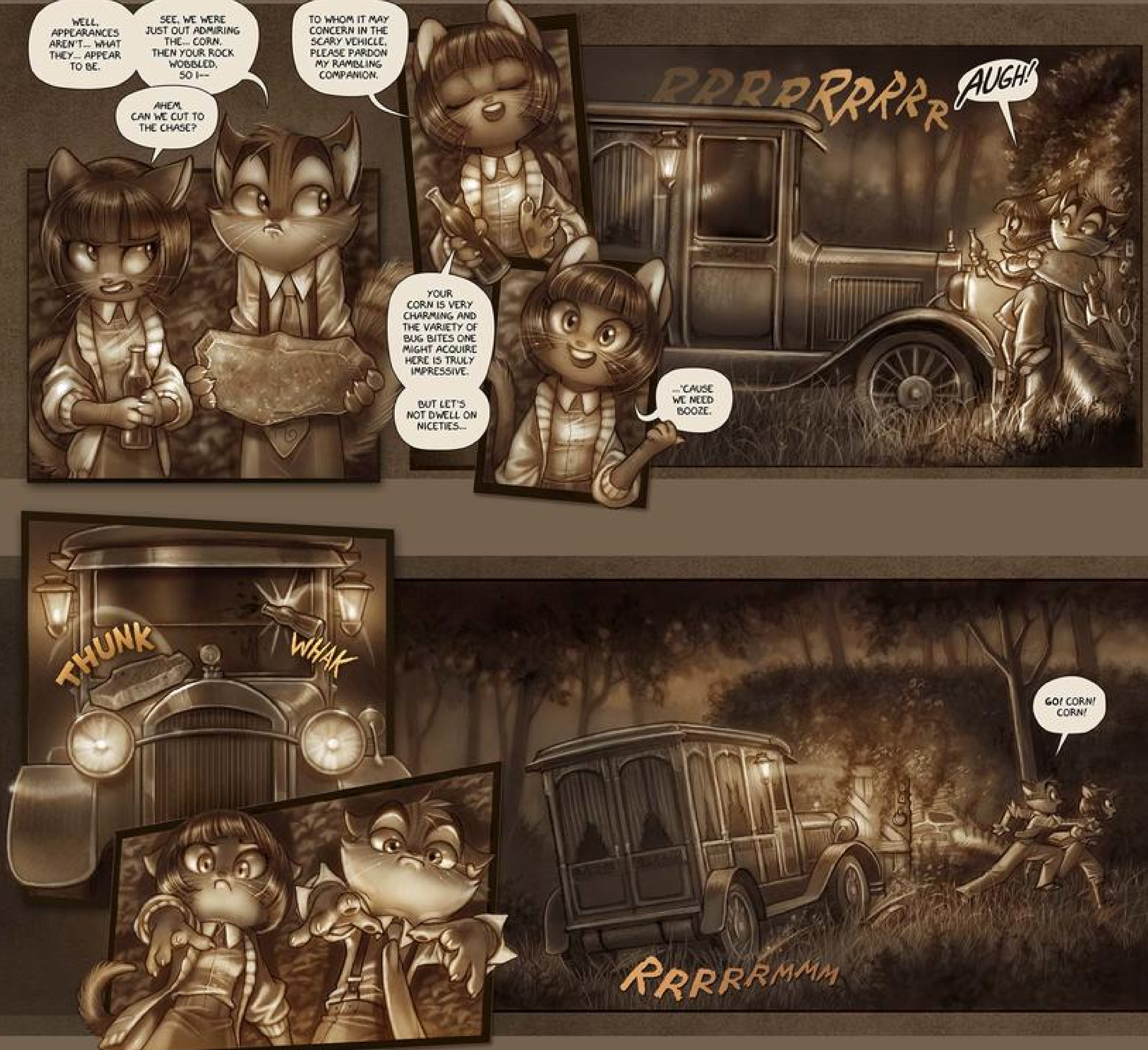

...UH.
IS MY LIP BLEEDING AGAIN, OR AM I JUST THAT PRETTY?
WHUH-!
YANK
HEH. WELL, LOOK AT THAT. FROM THE VANQUISHED EMPIRE, HUH?
I THOUGHT THAT PLACE WAS BUT A DISTANT MEMORY.
I'M CURIOUS – IS IT ACTUALLY STILL LIMPING ALONG, OR DID YOU JUST FORGET TO TAKE THIS OFF?
OH, *THAT?* IS THAT ALL?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, BUT...
...WELL, EVERY GAMBLER HAS A FAVORITE SUIT.
THIS ONE HASN'T BEEN SO LUCKY FOR ME LATELY, THOUGH, OR I WOULDN'T BE HERE TALKING TO YOU, OFFICER, UH... OR IS IT DETECTIVE?
NEITHER, BUT YOU FLATTER ME. I'M JUST SHARING OFFICE SPACE WITH THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST OVER THERE.
DOM DRAGO.
I'M WITH THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT.
WOW. THIS JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER.
TELL YOU WHAT – WE CAN PRETEND FOR NOW YOU'RE A GOOD LITTLE *TAX PAYER,* NOT A *SAX PLAYER.*
TRUST ME, I'VE GOT MUCH BIGGER FISH TO FRY.
SEE YOU AROUND.

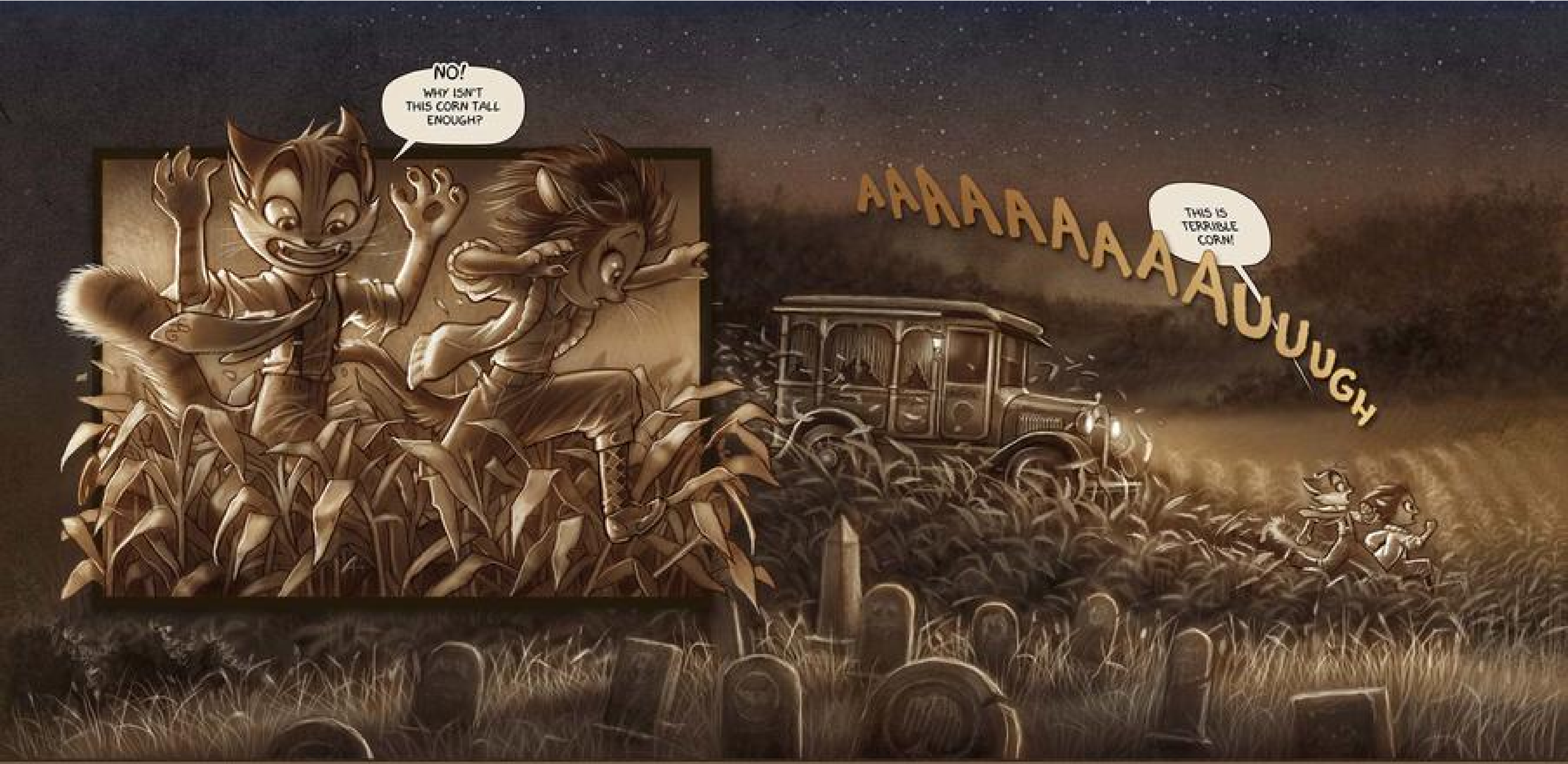

GOD, I HOPE NOT.
BUT THANKS FOR BEING THE ONLY ONE NOT TO HIT ME OR ATTEMPT TO ROB ME THIS EVENING.
PLEASURE WAS ALL MINE.
YOU'RE TOO KIND.
I DO MY BEST.
YEP. WELL, STAY OUT OF TROUBLE.
DAMMIT.
TINK
TINK

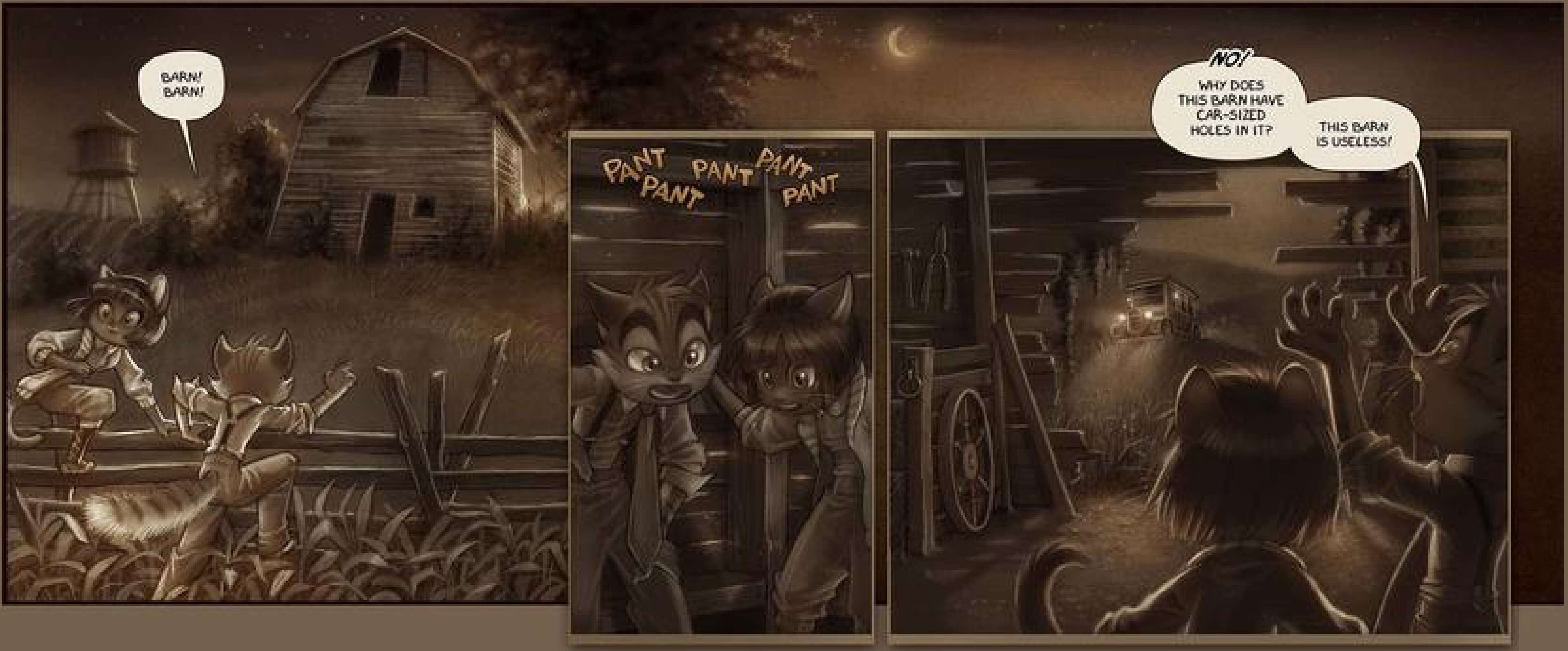

DEFIANCE IS A PRETTY BOLD NAME FOR A CORNFIELD-MOSQUITO-RANCH IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.
YOU'RE SURE THIS IS THE PLACE VIKTOR TOLD YOU ABOUT?
SURE AS A GOOSE IN GALOSHES.
...THAT IS, HE SHOULDN'T HAVE PUNCHED ME IN THE HEAD IF HE EXPECTED ME TO REMEMBER *EVERYTHING* HE SAID.
OH. WELL, GALOSHES WOULD BE NICE. WE'RE STANDING IN A CRICK OR SOMETHING
OOH! WHAT'S *THAT?*
WELL, BEGORRA! THERE'S A PROPER FAIRY MOUND IF I EVER SAW ONE.
THERE AREN'T ANY FAIRIES HERE – *AUGH!* JUST A LOT OF STUPID CICADAS.
SQUELCH
TROMP
TROMP
OKAY. WHADDID YOU FIND? A WEED LUMP WITH A DOOR?
IT'S AN OLD SPRINGHOUSE. I'D WAGER IT'S A HIDING PLACE TO BOOT.
HOW VERY MYSTERIOUS.
HEY, SPEAKING OF WHICH, HOW DO I GET YOUR CAGEY COUSIN TO TALK TO ME?
UHH, ASK HIM ABOUT THE CARDINALS.
HMM.
WOBBLE
...OR THE BROWNS, OR— AH!

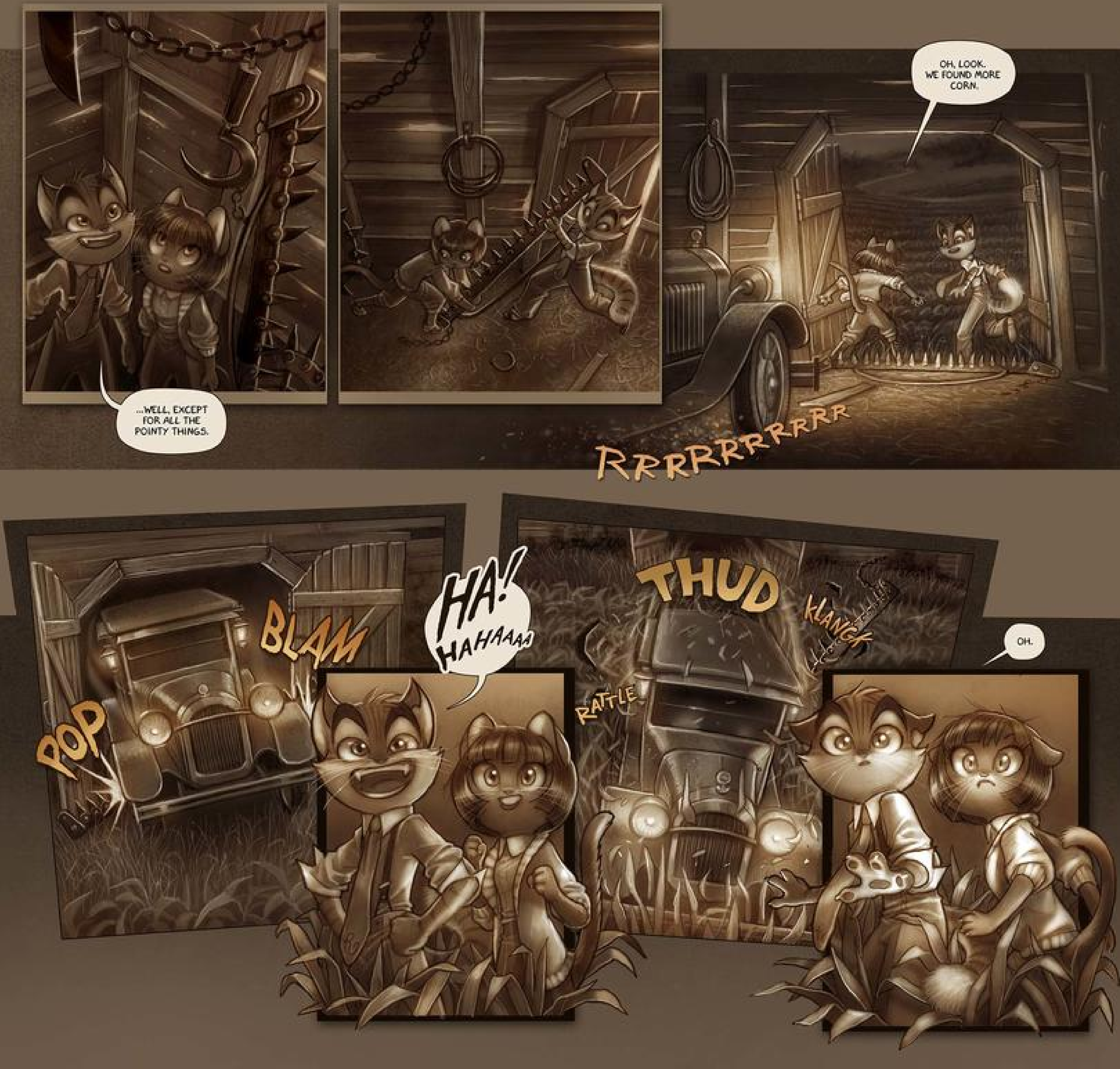

NO, I MEAN HOW DO I SLICE INTO THE JUICY CORE WHERE ALL THE DARK SECRETS AND TURMOIL AND INTERESTING STUFF IS?
...POKING AROUND DARK CORNERS IS LIABLE TO STIR UP SOME UNPLEASANTNESS, MISS PEPPER.
NOW, IF ONLY I COULD SEE-- AH, ILLUMINATION!
I MUST HAVE MOONBEAMS IN MY EYES!
TAP TAP TAP POKE
AND I SEE OUR SURLY SLOVAK WAS SINCERE, AFTER ALL.
ROCKY. ROCKY. ROCKY!
SUCH A SPARKLING STOCKPILE OF SPIRITS SHOULD SATISFACTORILY SUPPLANT THAT INSUFFERABLE SWILL WE SERVE! *HAHA!*
SLAP SLAP SLAP
MISS M. WILL BE SO... SO...

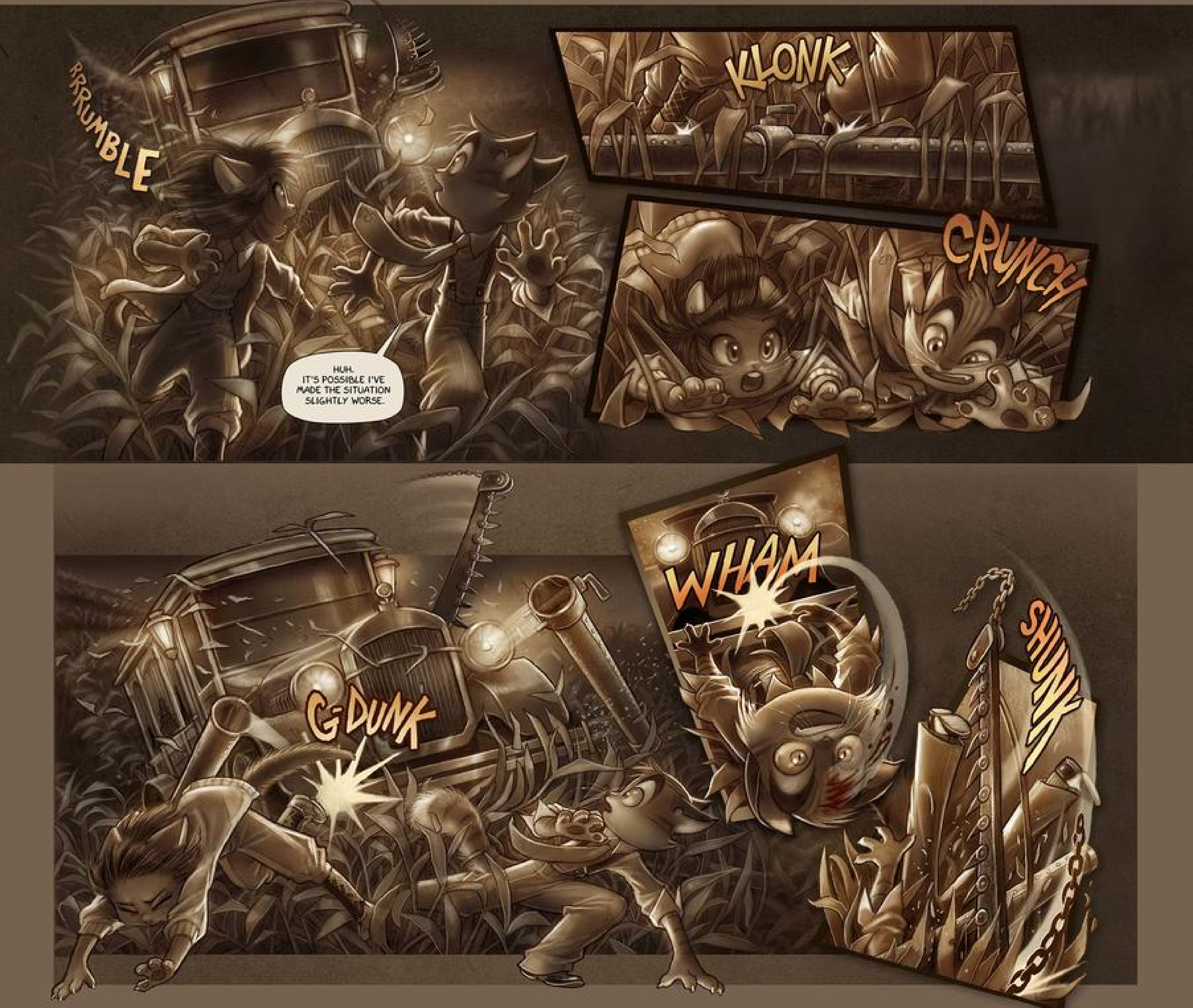

WHAT'S ANOTHER GOOD "S" WORD?
SMACK
OH.
HELLO, THERE!
HI!
THIS MUST BE *YOUR* WEED LUMP.
...I SUPPOSE YOU'RE WONDERING WHY I'M TAKING IT APART.

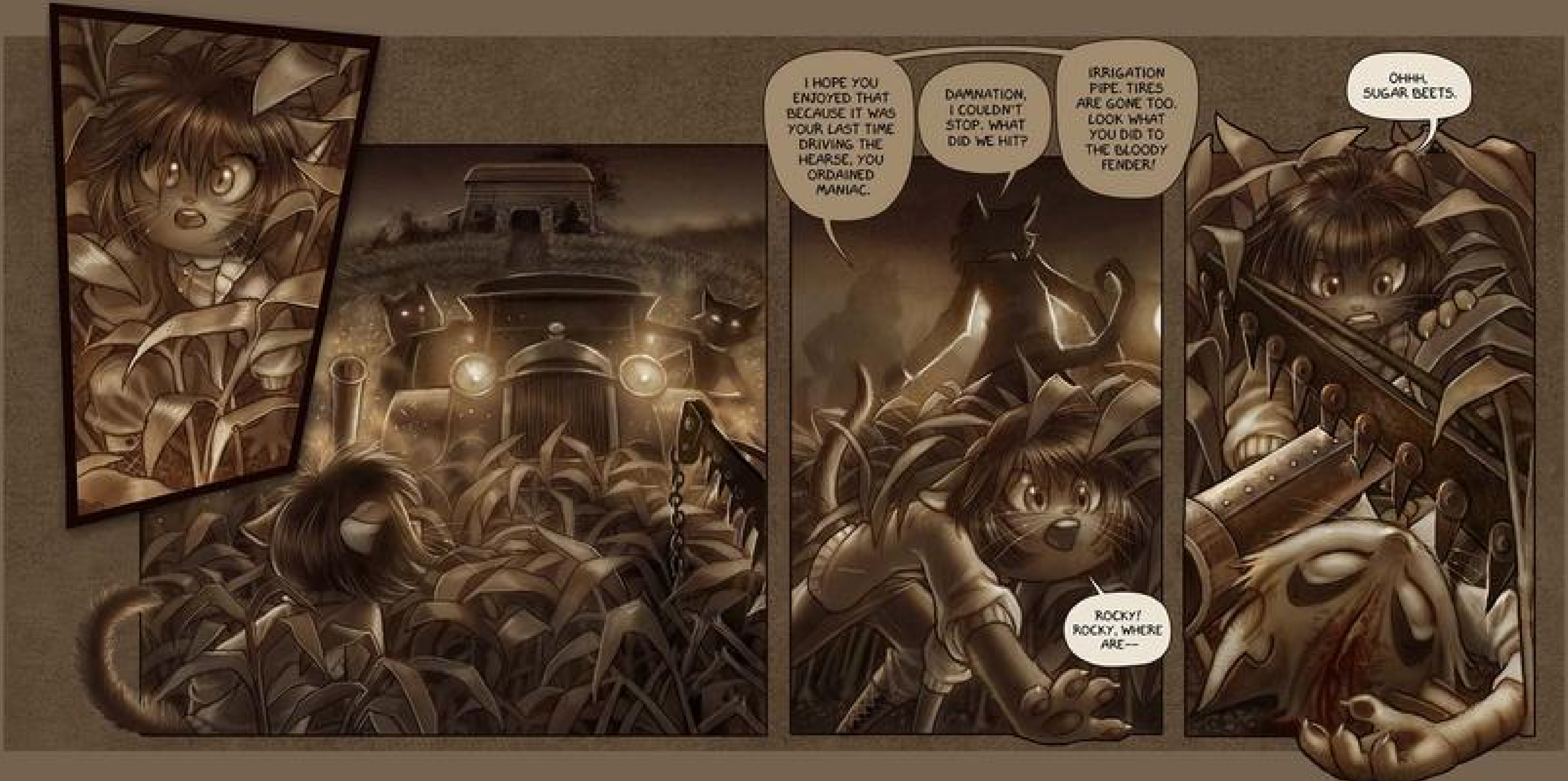

WELL, APPEARANCES AREN'T... WHAT THEY... APPEAR TO BE.
SEE, WE WERE JUST OUT ADMIRING THE... CORN. THEN YOUR ROCK WOBBLED. SO I—
AHEM, CAN WE CUT TO THE CHASE?
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN IN THE SCARY VEHICLE, PLEASE PARDON MY RAMBLING COMPANION.
YOUR CORN IS VERY CHARMING AND THE VARIETY OF BUG BITES ONE MIGHT ACQUIRE HERE IS TRULY IMPRESSIVE.
BUT LET'S NOT DWELL ON NICETIES...
...'CAUSE WE NEED BOOZE.
RRRRRRRRRR
AUGH!
THUNK
WHAK
GO! CORN! CORN!
RRRRRMMM

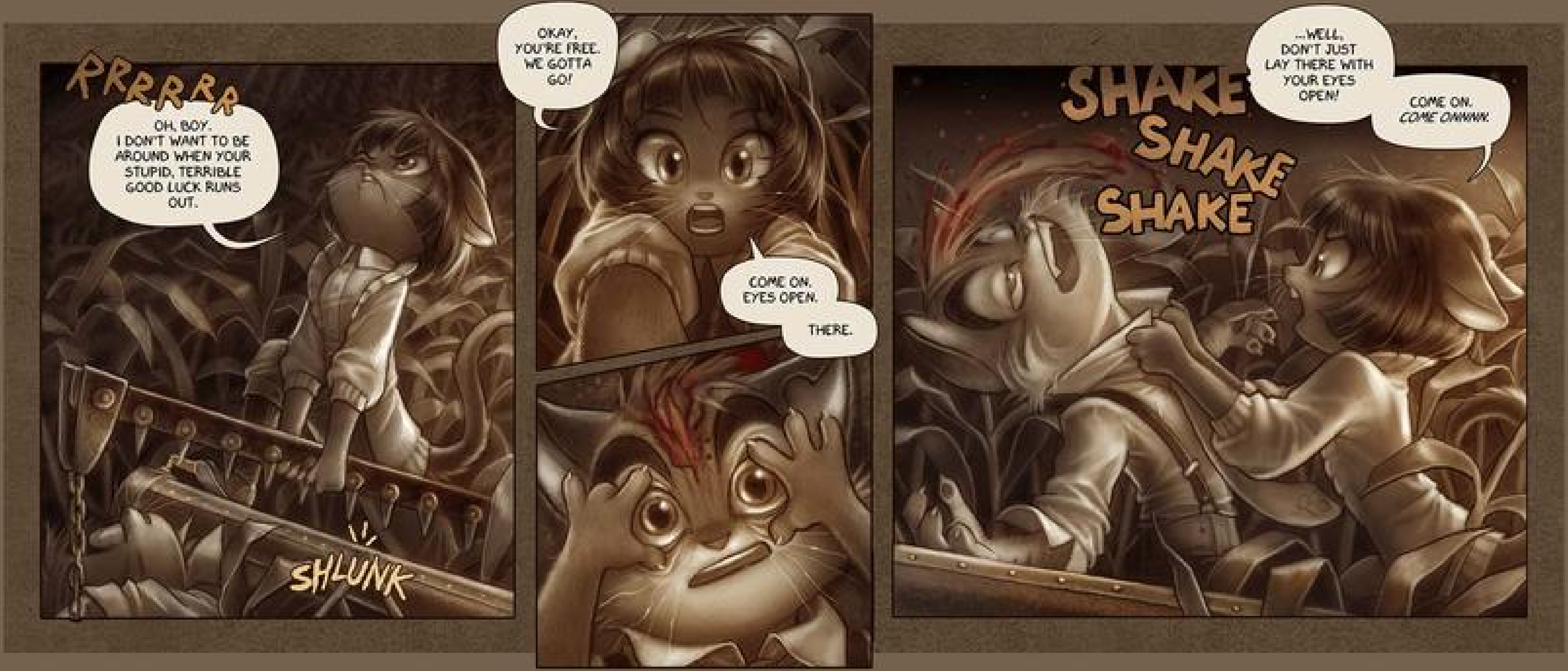

NO!
WHY ISN'T THIS CORN TALL ENOUGH?
AAAAAAAAAAUUUGH
THIS IS TERRIBLE CORN!

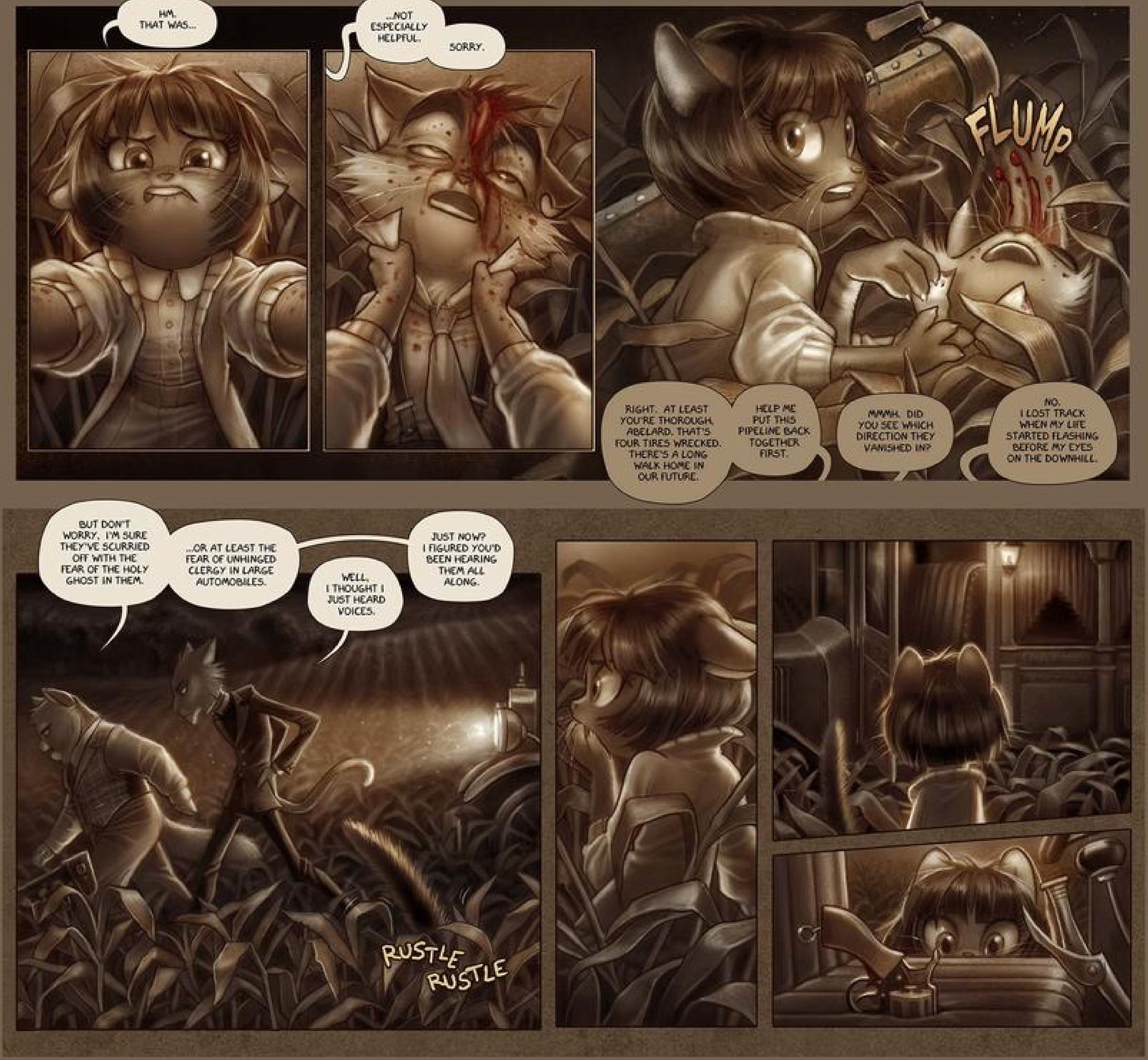

BARN! BARN!
PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT
NO!
WHY DOES THIS BARN HAVE CAR-SIZED HOLES IN IT?
THIS BARN IS USELESS!

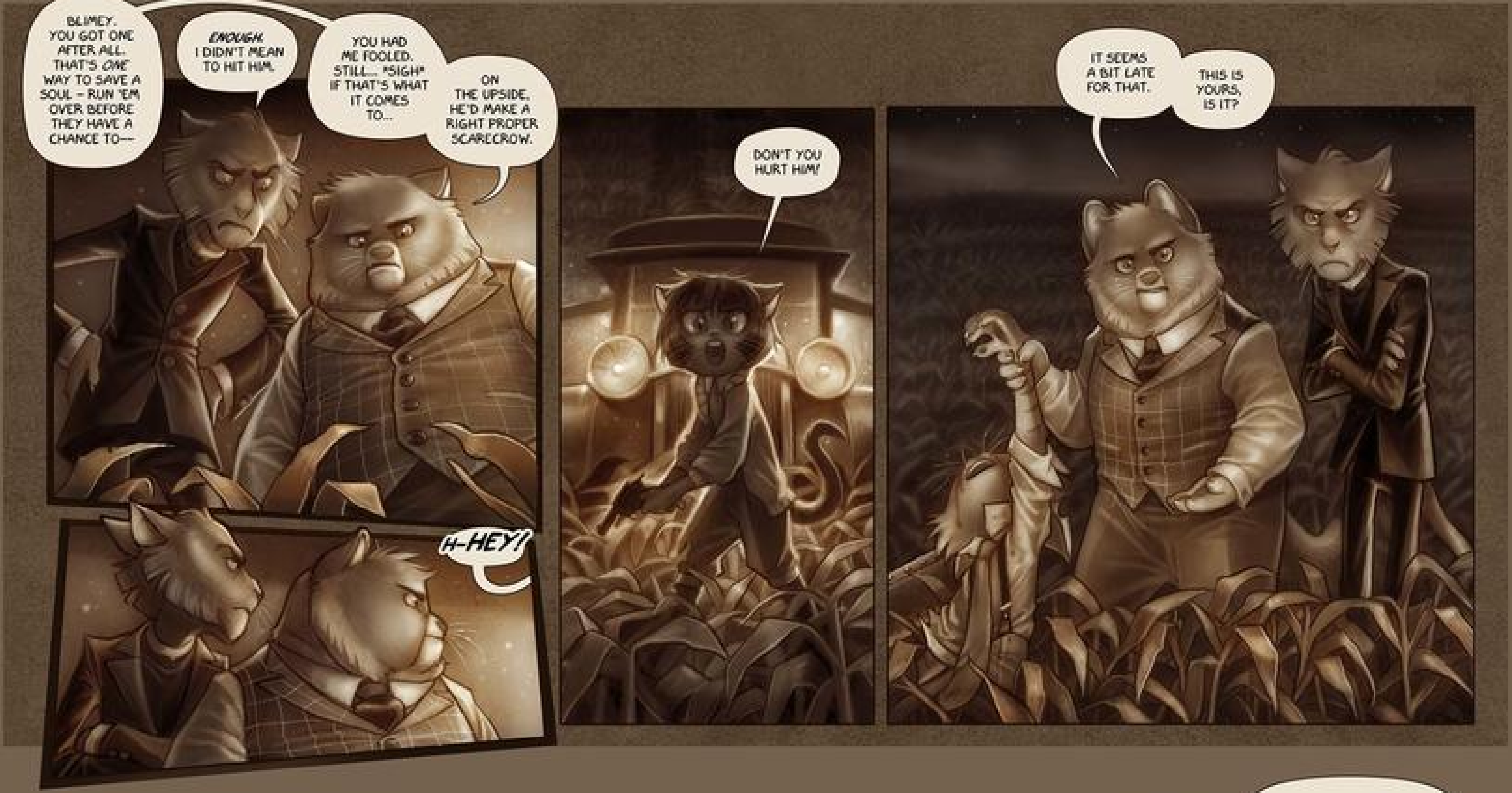

...WELL, EXCEPT FOR ALL THE POINTY THINGS.
OH, LOOK. WE FOUND MORE CORN.
RRRRRRRRRR
BLAM
POP
HA! HAHAAAA
THUD
KLANGK
RATTLE
OH.

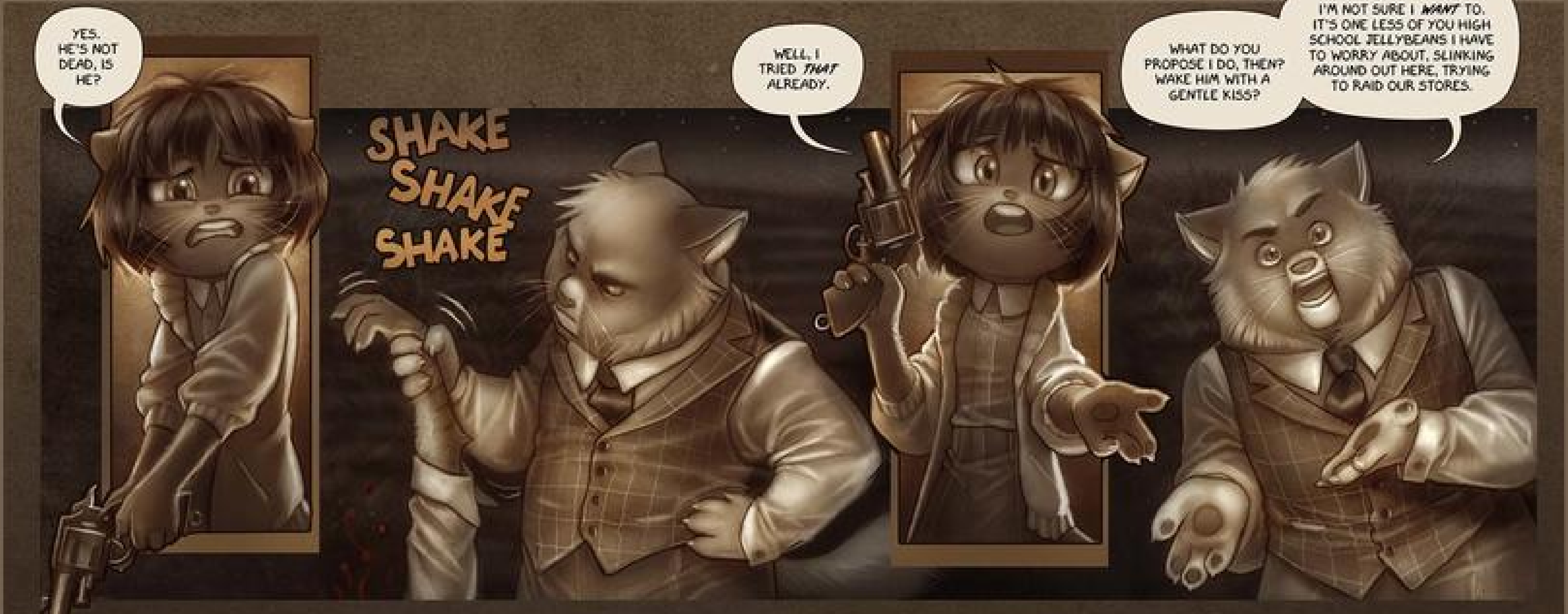

RRRUMBLE
HUH. IT'S POSSIBLE I'VE MADE THE SITUATION SLIGHTLY WORSE.
KLONK
CRUNCH
G-DUNK
WHAM
SHUNK

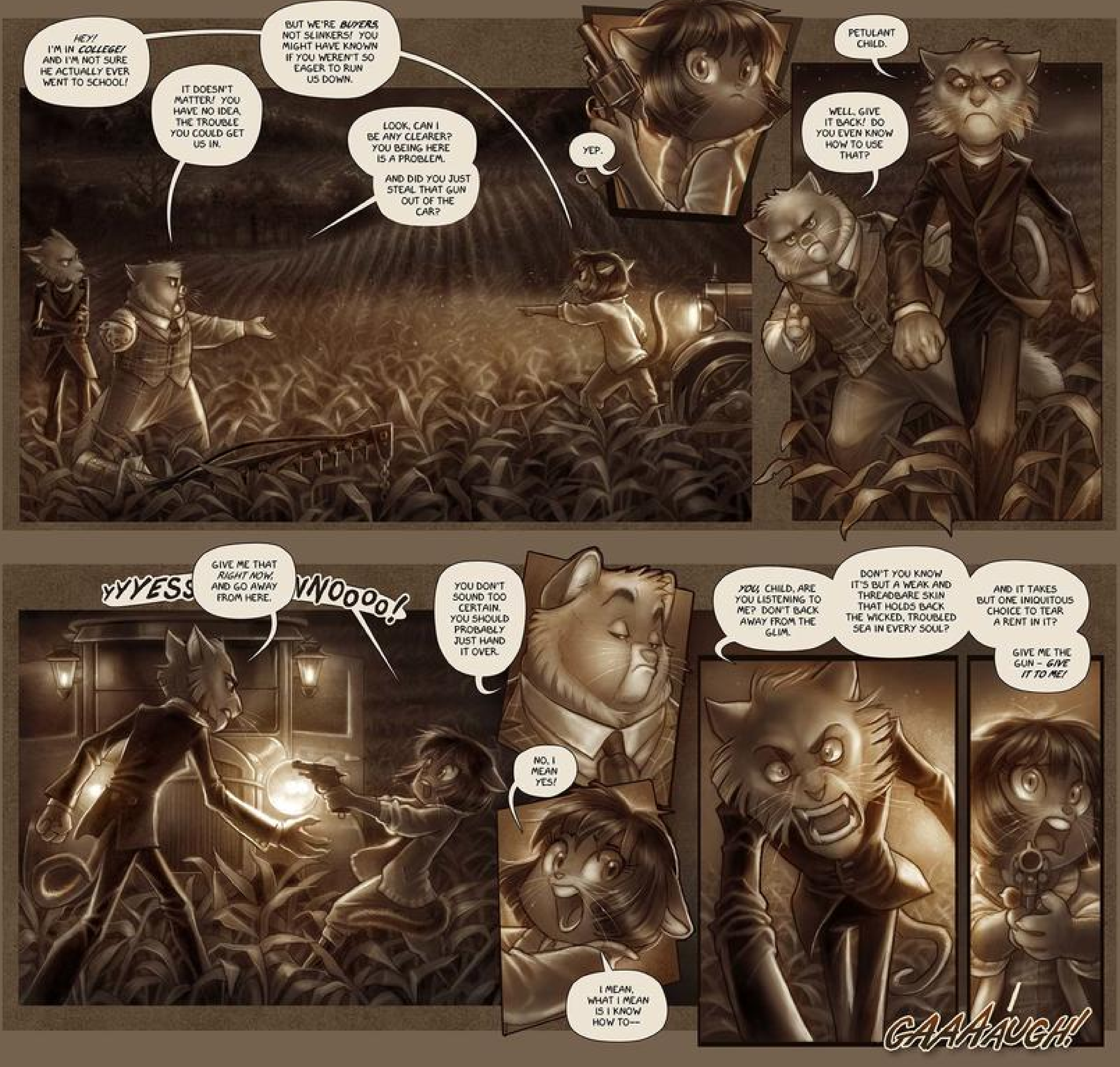

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THAT BECAUSE IT WAS YOUR LAST TIME DRIVING THE HEARSE, YOU ORDAINED MANIAC.
DAMNATION, I COULDN'T STOP. WHAT DID WE HIT?
IRRIGATION PIPE. TIRES ARE GONE TOO. LOOK WHAT YOU DID TO THE BLOODY FENDER!
ROCKY! ROCKY, WHERE ARE--
OHHH, SUGAR BEETS.

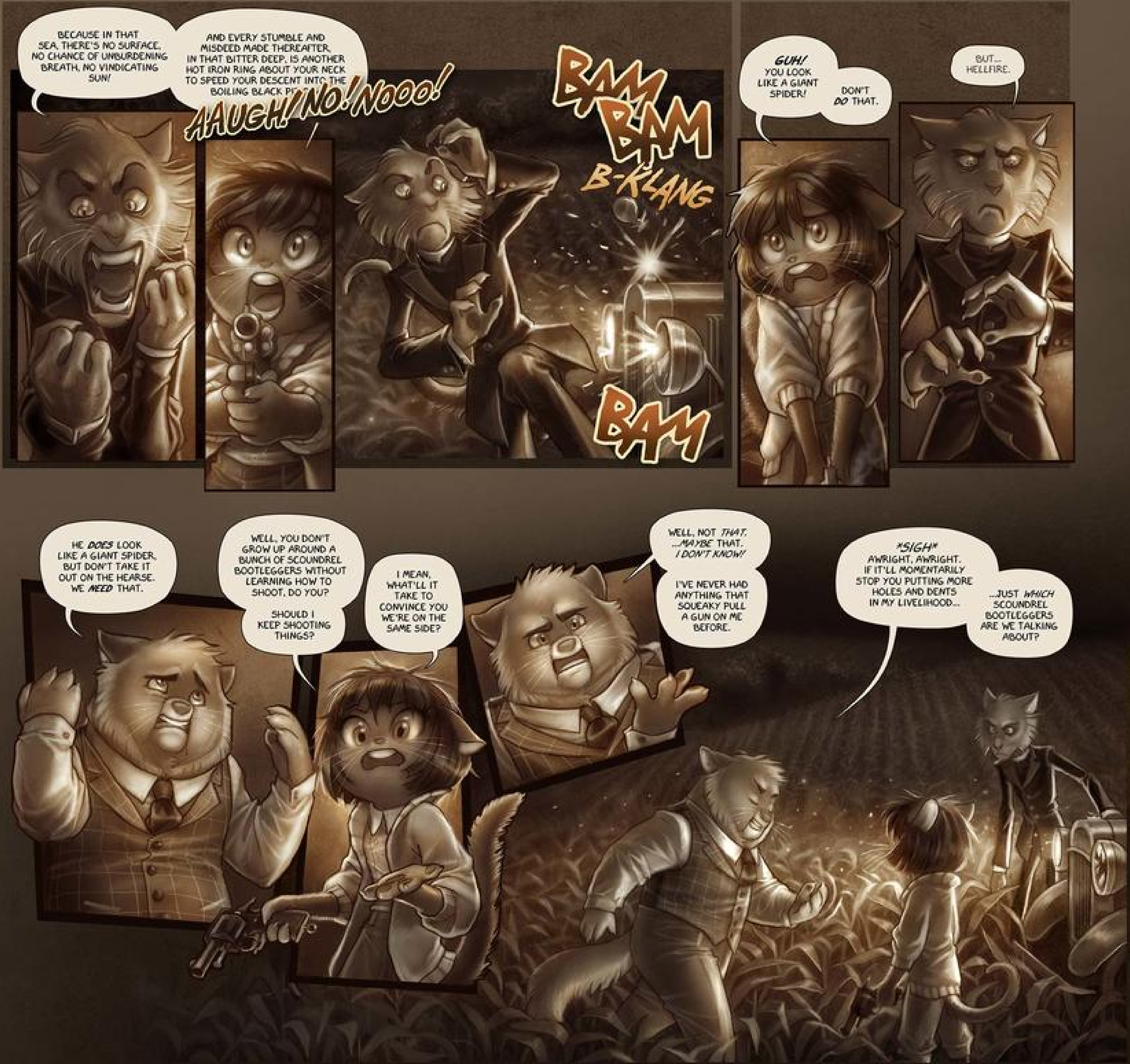

RRRRRR
OH, BOY. I DON'T WANT TO BE AROUND WHEN YOUR STUPID, TERRIBLE GOOD LUCK RUNS OUT.
SHLUNK
OKAY, YOU'RE FREE. WE GOTTA GO!
COME ON. EYES OPEN.
THERE.
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
...WELL, DON'T JUST LAY THERE WITH YOUR EYES OPEN!
COME ON. COME ONNNN.

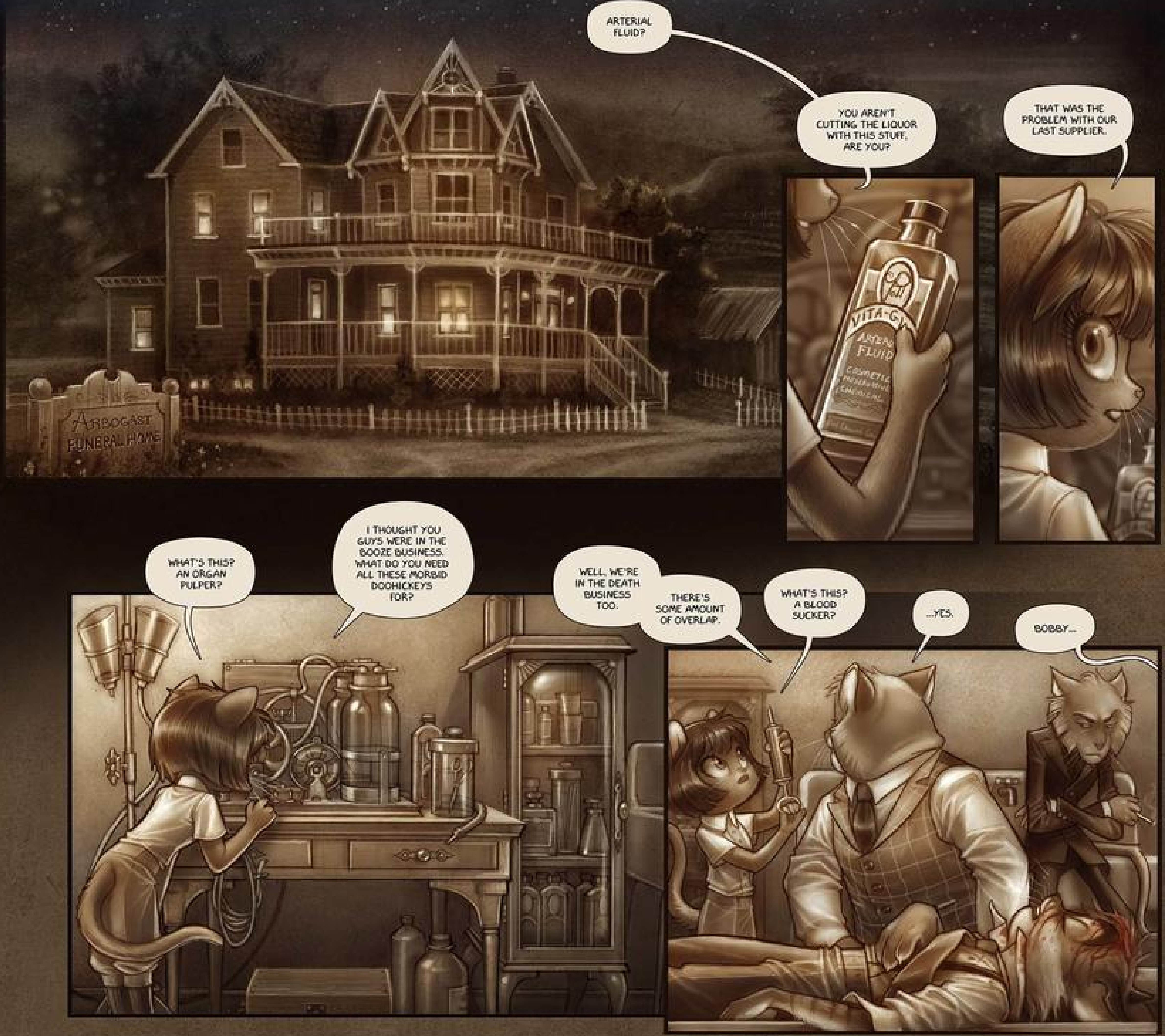

HM. THAT WAS...
...NOT ESPECIALLY HELPFUL.
SORRY.
FLUMP
RIGHT. AT LEAST YOU'RE THOROUGH, ABELARD. THAT'S FOUR TIRES WRECKED. THERE'S A LONG WALK HOME IN OUR FUTURE.
HELP ME PUT THIS PIPELINE BACK TOGETHER FIRST.
MMMH. DID YOU SEE WHICH DIRECTION THEY VANISHED IN?
NO. I LOST TRACK WHEN MY LIFE STARTED FLASHING BEFORE MY EYES ON THE DOWNHILL.
BUT DON'T WORRY, I'M SURE THEY'VE SCURRIED OFF WITH THE FEAR OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THEM.
...OR AT LEAST THE FEAR OF UNHINGED CLERGY IN LARGE AUTOMOBILES.
WELL, I THOUGHT I JUST HEARD VOICES.
JUST NOW? I FIGURED YOU'D BEEN HEARING THEM ALL ALONG.
RUSTLE RUSTLE

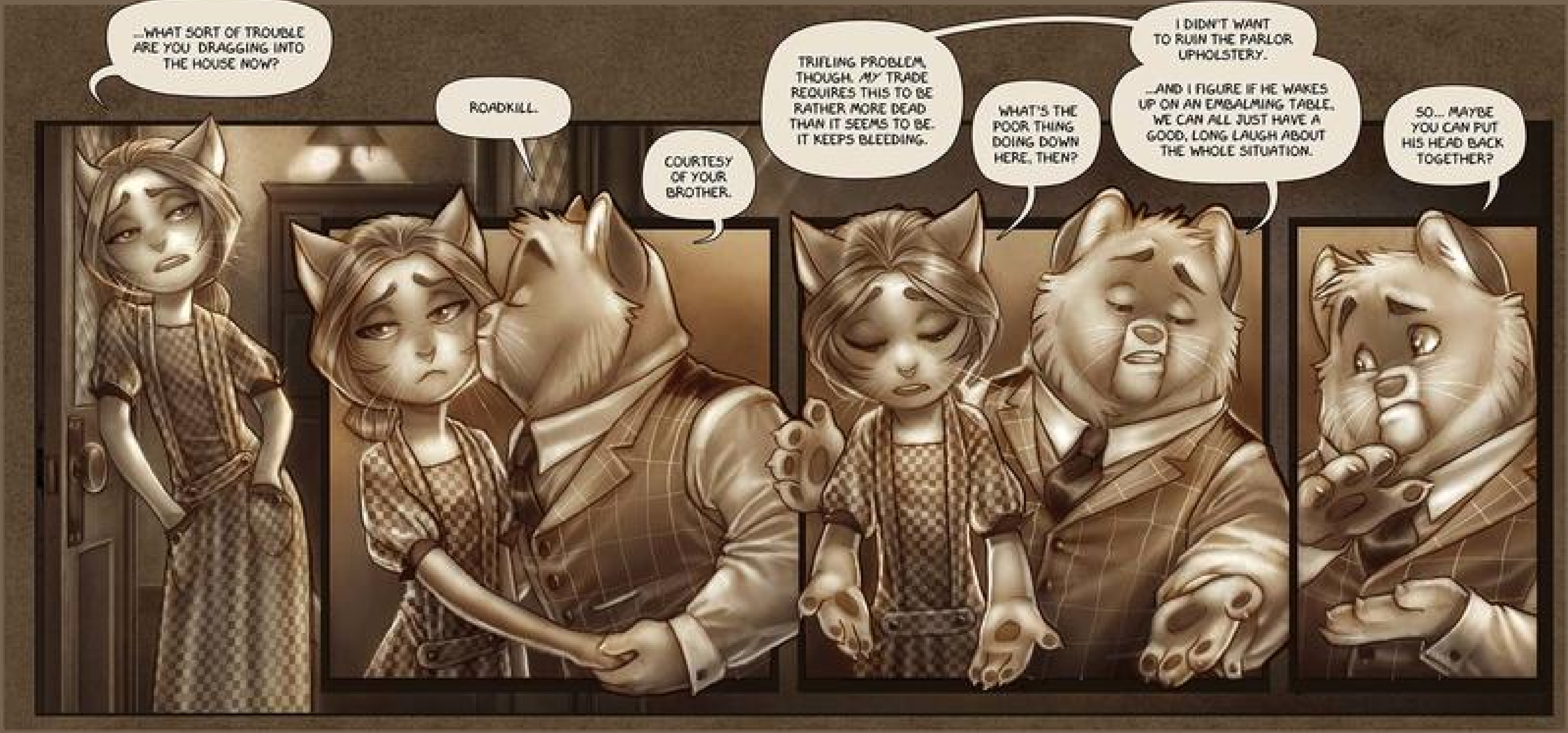

BLIMEY. YOU GOT ONE AFTER ALL. THAT'S *ONE* WAY TO SAVE A SOUL – RUN 'EM OVER BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO—
ENOUGH. I DIDN'T MEAN TO HIT HIM.
YOU HAD ME FOOLED. STILL... *SIGH* IF THAT'S WHAT IT COMES TO...
ON THE UPSIDE, HE'D MAKE A RIGHT PROPER SCARECROW.
H-HEY!
DON'T YOU HURT HIM!
IT SEEMS A BIT LATE FOR THAT.
THIS IS YOURS, IS IT?

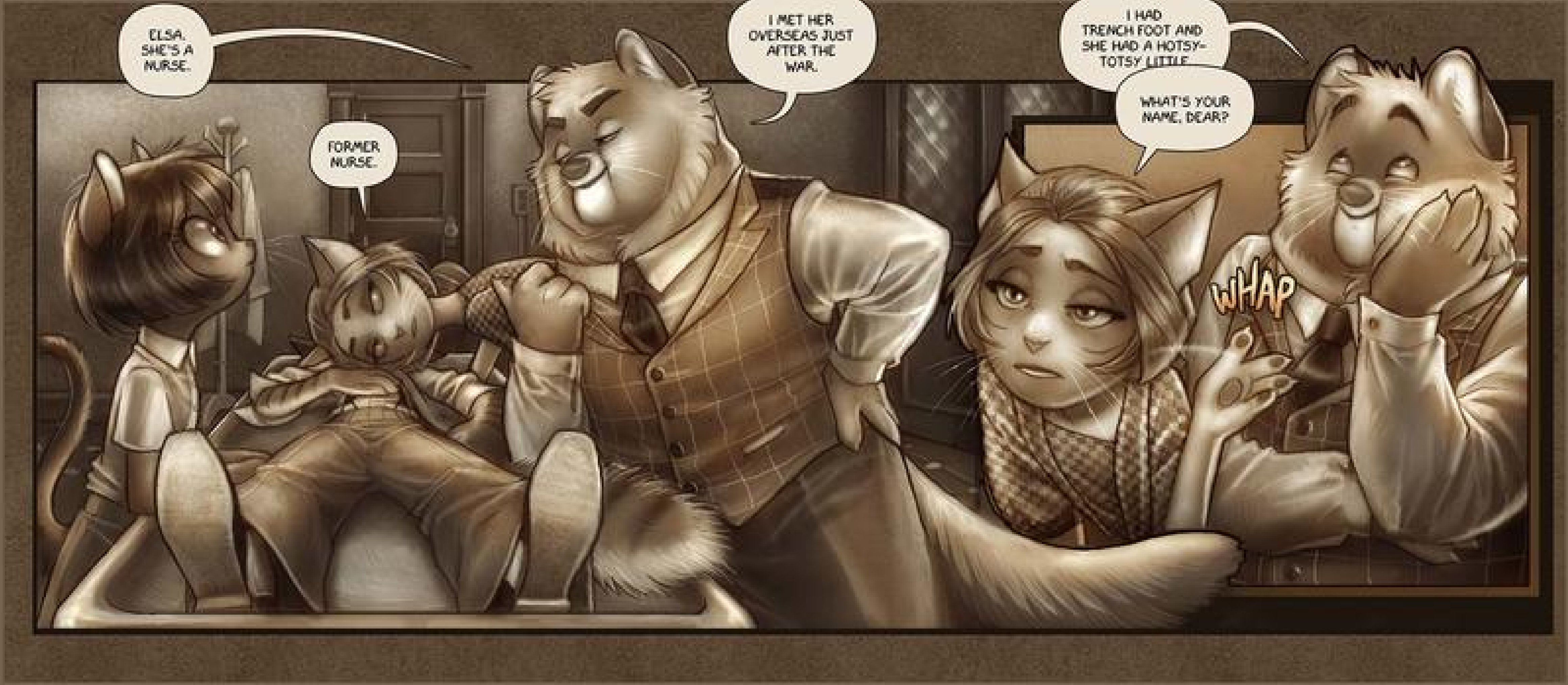

YES. HE'S NOT DEAD, IS HE?
SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE
WELL, I TRIED *THAT* ALREADY.
WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE I DO, THEN? WAKE HIM WITH A GENTLE KISS?
I'M NOT SURE I *WANT* TO. IT'S ONE LESS OF YOU HIGH SCHOOL JELLYBEANS I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT, SLINKING AROUND OUT HERE, TRYING TO RAID OUR STORES.

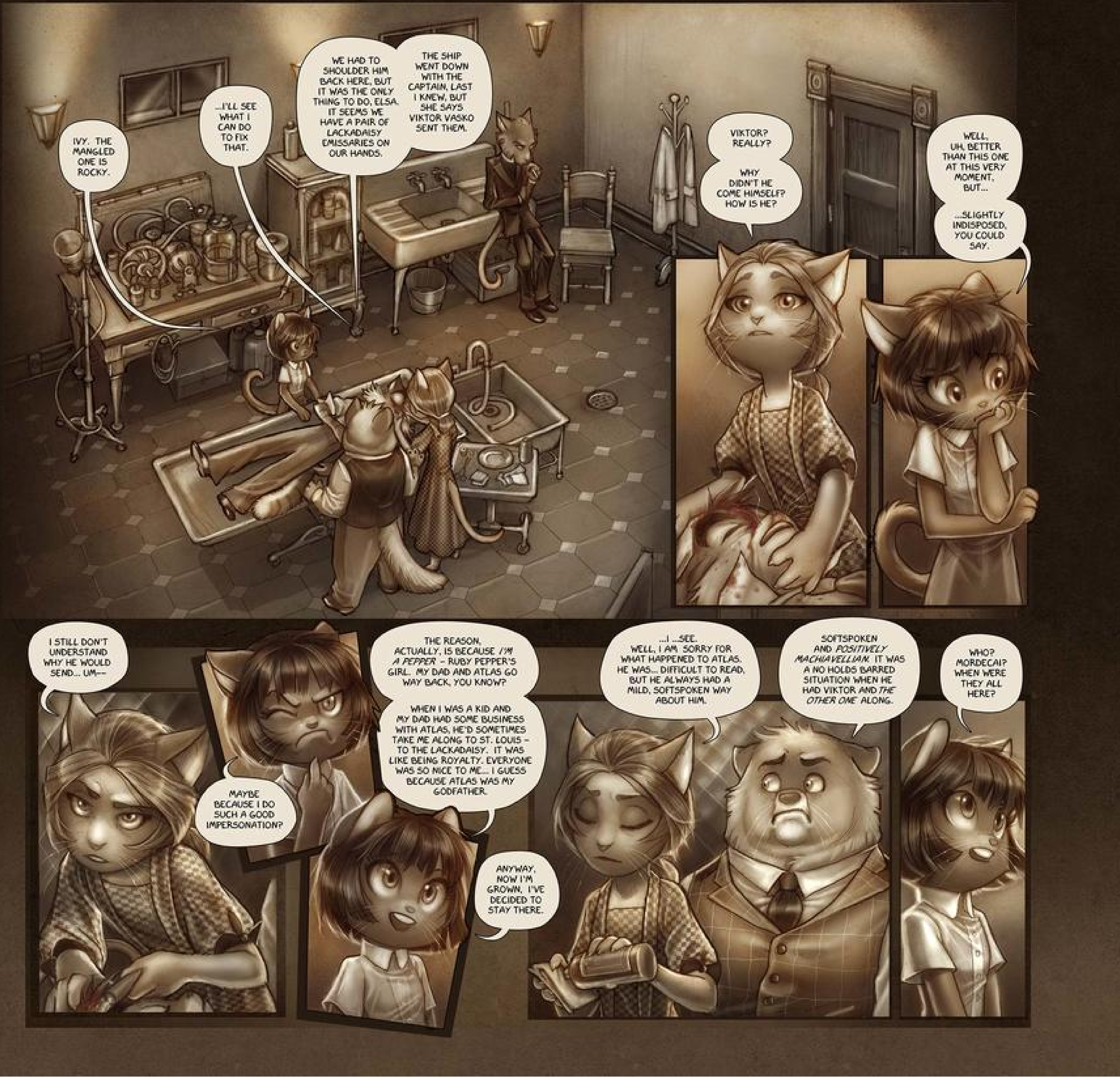

HEY! I'M IN *COLLEGE!* AND I'M NOT SURE HE ACTUALLY EVER WENT TO SCHOOL!
IT DOESN'T MATTER! YOU HAVE NO IDEA THE TROUBLE YOU COULD GET US IN.
BUT WE'RE *BUYERS,* NOT SLINKERS! YOU MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IF YOU WEREN'T SO EAGER TO RUN US DOWN.
LOOK, CAN I BE *ANY CLEARER?* YOU BEING HERE IS A PROBLEM.
AND DID YOU JUST STEAL THAT GUN OUT OF THE CAR?
YEP.
PETULANT CHILD.
WELL, GIVE IT BACK! DO YOU EVEN KNOW HOW TO USE THAT?
YYYESS
GIVE ME THAT *RIGHT NOW,* AND GO AWAY FROM HERE.
NOoooo!
YOU DON'T SOUND TOO CERTAIN. YOU SHOULD PROBABLY JUST HAND IT OVER.
NO, I MEAN YES!
I MEAN, WHAT I MEAN IS I KNOW HOW TO--
YOU, CHILD, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? DON'T BACK AWAY FROM THE GLIM.
DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S BUT A WEAK AND THREADBARE SKIN THAT HOLDS BACK THE WICKED, TROUBLED SEA IN EVERY SOUL?
AND IT TAKES BUT ONE INIQUITOUS CHOICE TO TEAR A RENT IN IT?
GIVE ME THE GUN – *GIVE IT TO ME!*
GAAAAUGH!

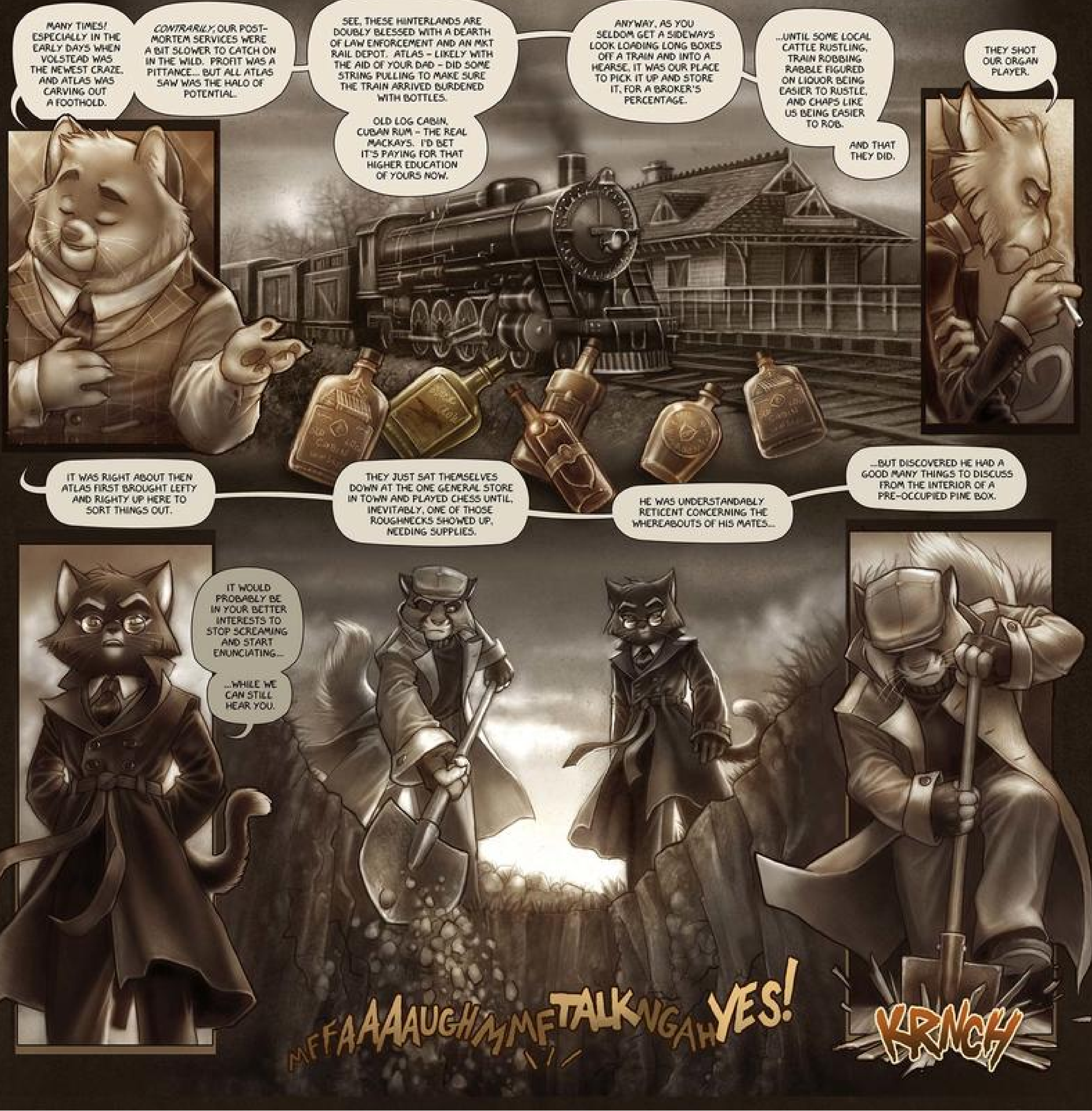

BECAUSE IN THAT SEA, THERE'S NO SURFACE, NO CHANCE OF UNBURDENING BREATH, NO VINDICATING SUN!
AND EVERY STUMBLE AND MISDEED MADE THEREAFTER, IN THAT BITTER DEEP, IS ANOTHER HOT IRON RING ABOUT YOUR NECK TO SPEED YOUR DESCENT INTO THE BOILING BLACK P
AAUGH! NO! NOOO!
BAM BAM
B-KLANG
BAM
GUH! YOU LOOK LIKE A GIANT SPIDER!
DON'T *DO* THAT.
BUT... HELLFIRE.
HE *DOES* LOOK LIKE A GIANT SPIDER, BUT DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON THE HEARSE. WE *NEED* THAT.
WELL, YOU DON'T GROW UP AROUND A BUNCH OF SCOUNDREL BOOTLEGGERS WITHOUT LEARNING HOW TO SHOOT, DO YOU?
SHOULD I KEEP SHOOTING THINGS?
I MEAN, WHAT'LL IT TAKE TO CONVINCE YOU WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE?
WELL, NOT *THAT*. ...*MAYBE* THAT. *I DON'T KNOW!*
I'VE NEVER HAD ANYTHING THAT SQUEAKY PULL A GUN ON ME BEFORE.
SIGH AWRIGHT, AWRIGHT. IF IT'LL MOMENTARILY STOP YOU PUTTING MORE HOLES AND DENTS IN MY LIVELIHOOD...
...JUST *WHICH* SCOUNDREL BOOTLEGGERS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

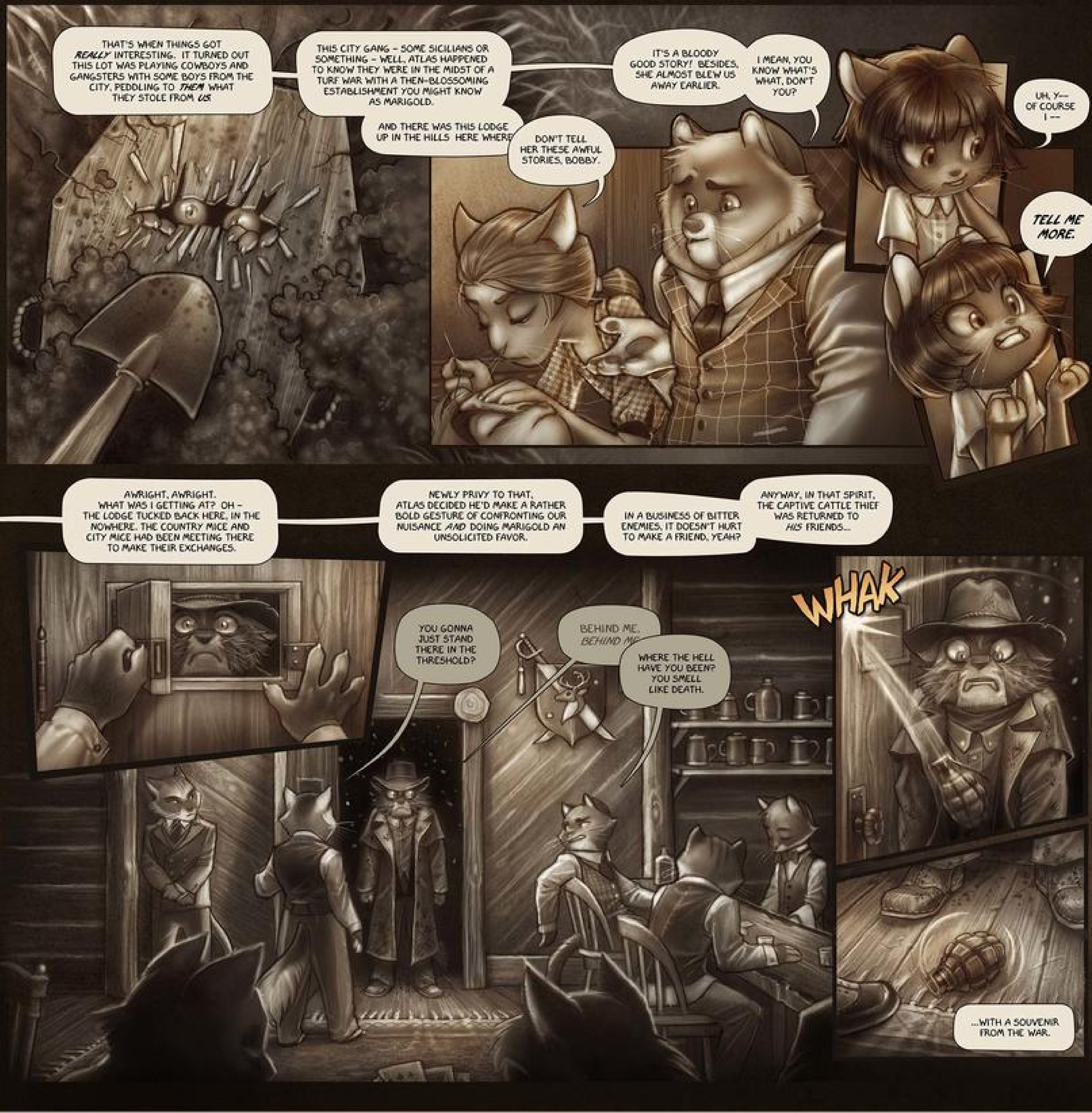

ARBOGAST FUNERAL HOME
ARTERIAL FLUID?
YOU AREN'T CUTTING THE LIQUOR WITH THIS STUFF, ARE YOU?
VITA-G
ARTERIAL FLUID
COSMETIC PRESERVATIVE CHEMICAL
THAT WAS THE PROBLEM WITH OUR LAST SUPPLIER.
WHAT'S THIS? AN ORGAN PULPER?
I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE IN THE BOOZE BUSINESS. WHAT DO YOU NEED ALL THESE MORBID DOOHICKEYS FOR?
WELL, WE'RE IN THE DEATH BUSINESS TOO.
THERE'S SOME AMOUNT OF OVERLAP.
WHAT'S THIS? A BLOOD SUCKER?
...YES.
BOBBY...

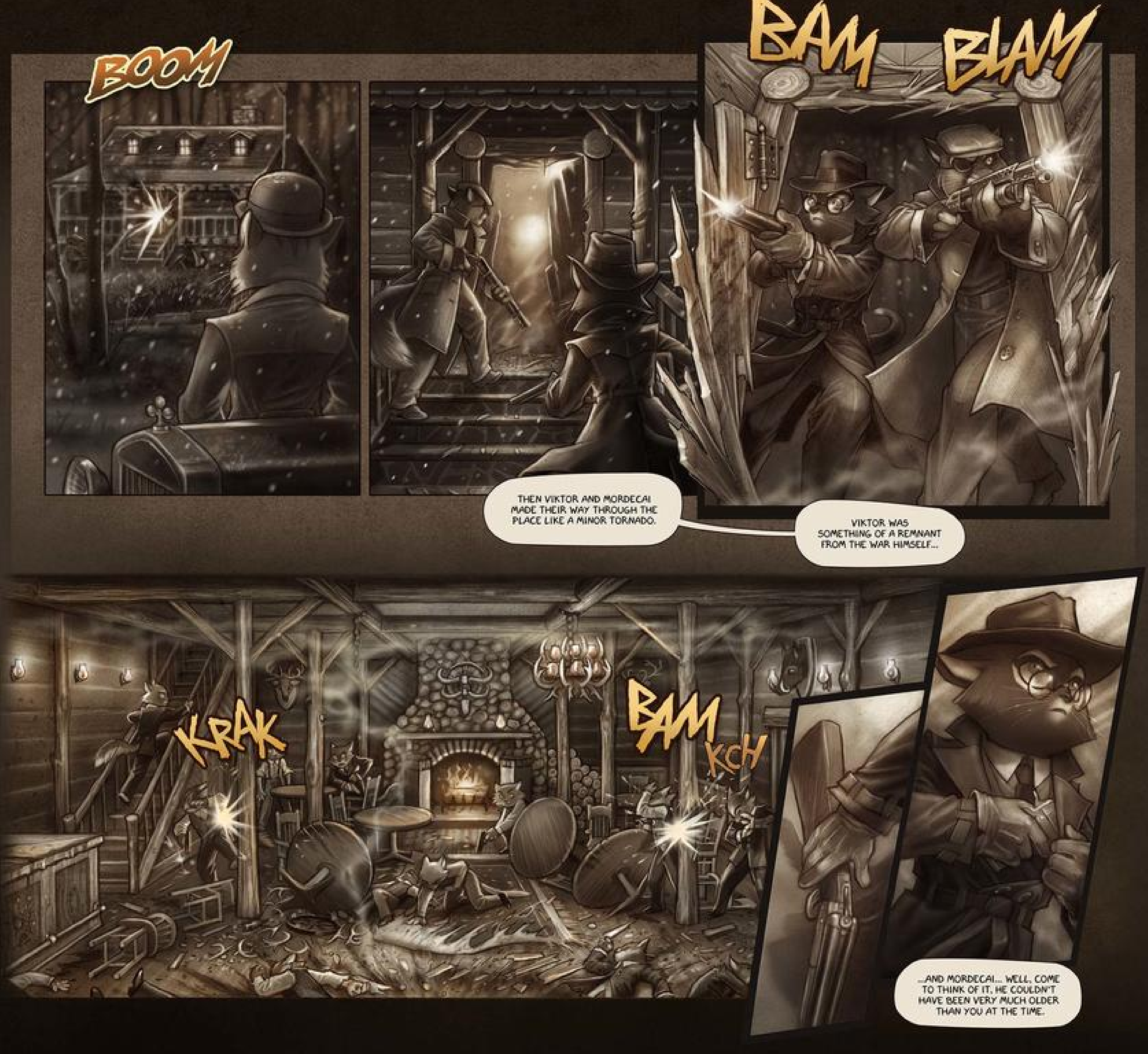

...WHAT SORT OF TROUBLE ARE YOU DRAGGING INTO THE HOUSE NOW?
ROADKILL.
COURTESY OF YOUR BROTHER.
TRIFLING PROBLEM, THOUGH. *MY* TRADE REQUIRES THIS TO BE RATHER MORE DEAD THAN IT SEEMS TO BE. IT KEEPS BLEEDING.
WHAT'S THE POOR THING DOING DOWN HERE, THEN?
I DIDN'T WANT TO RUIN THE PARLOR UPHOLSTERY.
...AND I FIGURE IF HE WAKES UP ON AN EMBALMING TABLE, WE CAN ALL JUST HAVE A GOOD, LONG LAUGH ABOUT THE WHOLE SITUATION.
SO... MAYBE YOU CAN PUT HIS HEAD BACK TOGETHER?

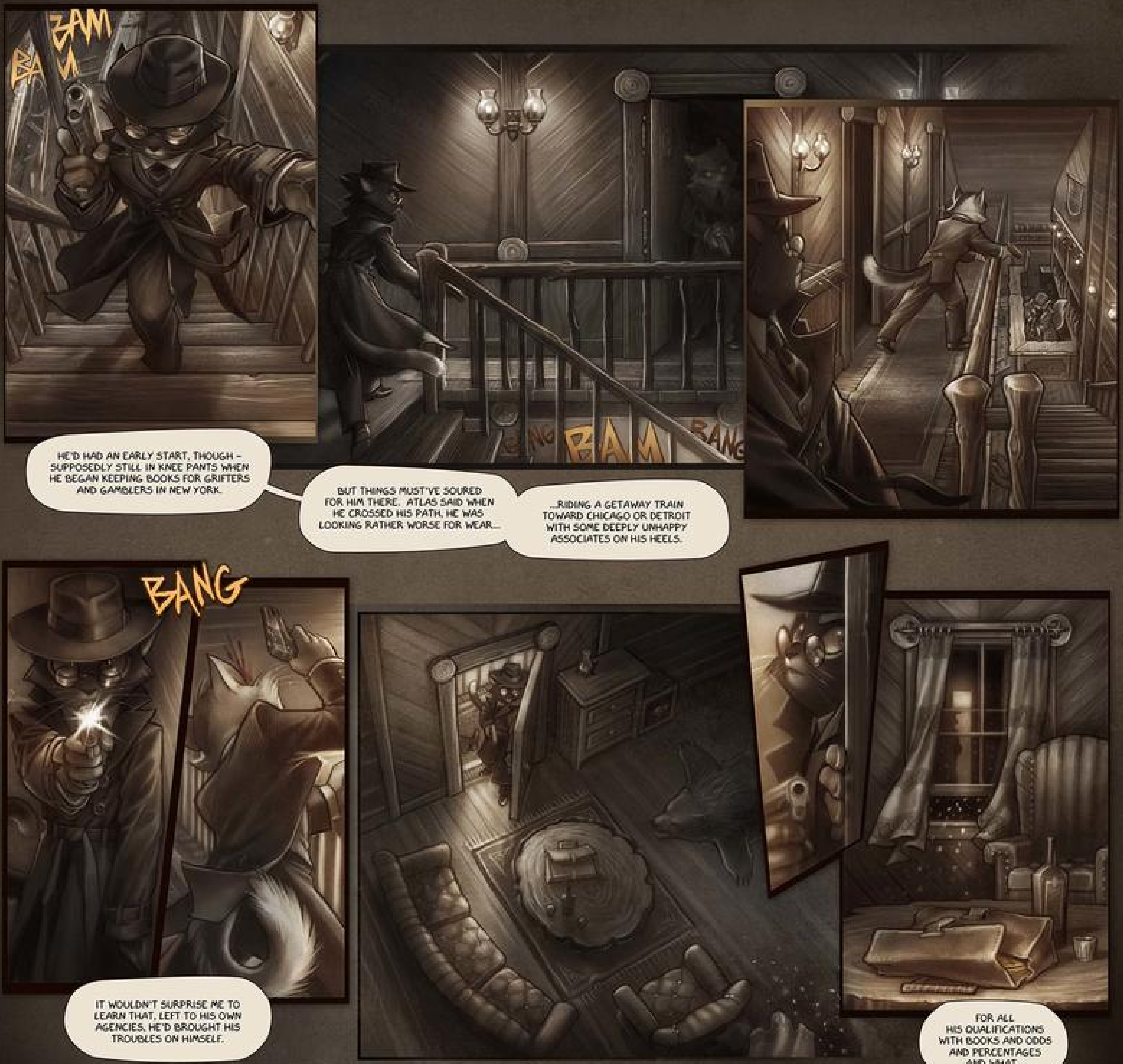

ELSA. SHE'S A NURSE.
FORMER NURSE.
I MET HER OVERSEAS JUST AFTER THE WAR.
I HAD TRENCH FOOT AND SHE HAD A HOTSY-TOTSY LITTLE
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, DEAR?
WHAP

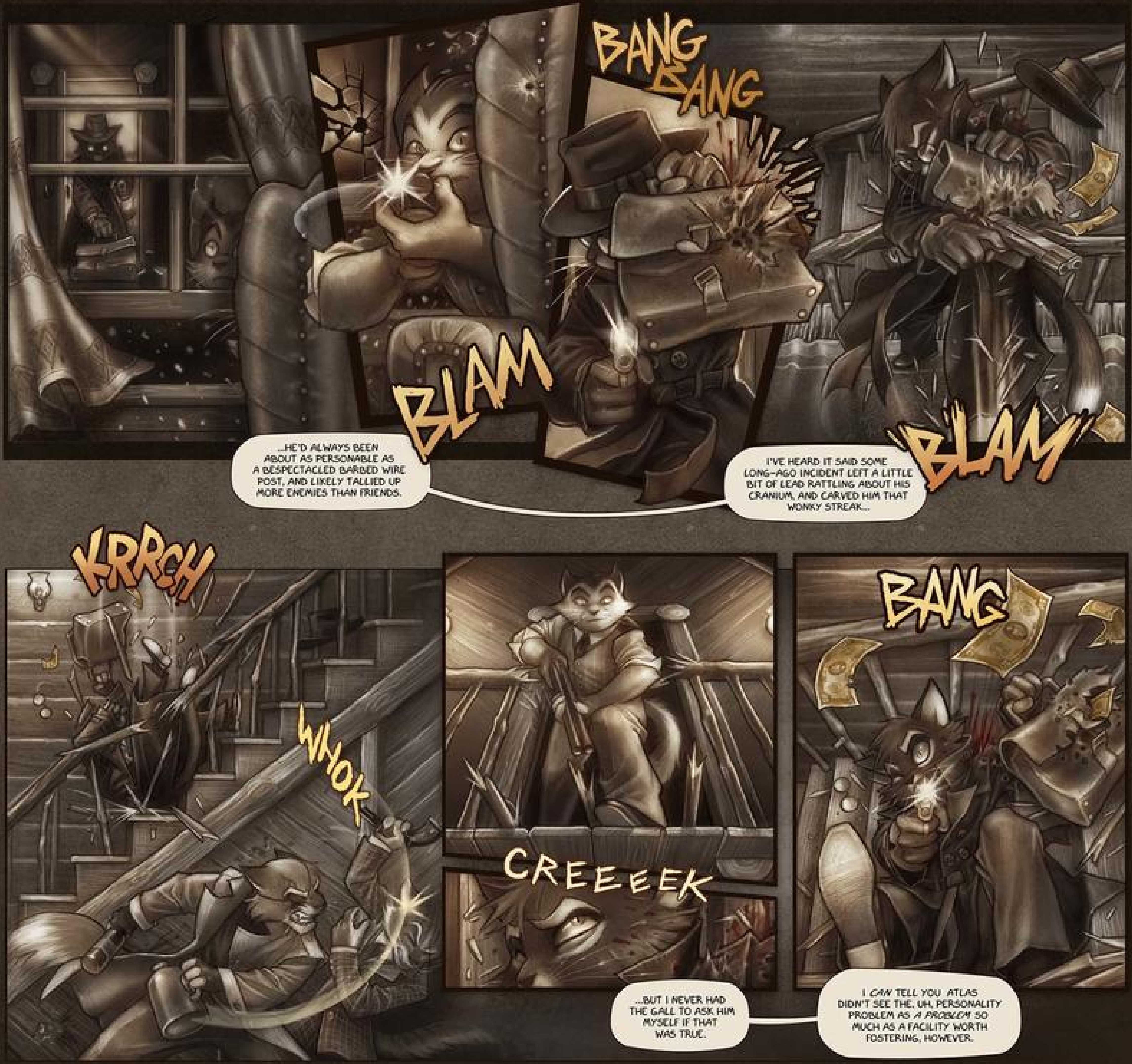

IVY. THE MANGLED ONE IS ROCKY.
...I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO TO FIX THAT.
WE HAD TO SHOULDER HIM BACK HERE, BUT IT WAS THE ONLY THING TO DO, ELSA. IT SEEMS WE HAVE A PAIR OF LACKADAISY EMISSARIES ON OUR HANDS.
THE SHIP WENT DOWN WITH THE CAPTAIN, LAST I KNEW, BUT SHE SAYS VIKTOR VASKO SENT THEM.
VIKTOR? REALLY?
WHY DIDN'T HE COME HIMSELF? HOW IS HE?
WELL, UH, BETTER THAN THIS ONE AT THIS VERY MOMENT, BUT...
...SLIGHTLY INDISPOSED, YOU COULD SAY.
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE WOULD SEND... UM--
MAYBE BECAUSE I DO SUCH A GOOD IMPERSONATION?
THE REASON, ACTUALLY, IS BECAUSE *I'M A PEPPER* – RUBY PEPPER'S GIRL. MY DAD AND ATLAS GO WAY BACK, YOU KNOW?
WHEN I WAS A KID AND MY DAD HAD SOME BUSINESS WITH ATLAS, HE'D SOMETIMES TAKE ME ALONG TO ST. LOUIS – TO THE LACKADAISY. IT WAS LIKE BEING ROYALTY. EVERYONE WAS SO NICE TO ME... I GUESS BECAUSE ATLAS WAS MY GODFATHER.
ANYWAY, NOW I'M GROWN, I'VE DECIDED TO STAY THERE.
...I ...SEE. WELL, I AM SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO ATLAS. HE WAS... DIFFICULT TO READ, BUT HE ALWAYS HAD A MILD, SOFTSPOKEN WAY ABOUT HIM.
SOFTSPOKEN AND *POSITIVELY MACHIAVELLIAN.* IT WAS A NO HOLDS BARRED SITUATION WHEN HE HAD VIKTOR AND *THE OTHER ONE* ALONG.
WHO? MORDECAI? WHEN WERE THEY ALL HERE?

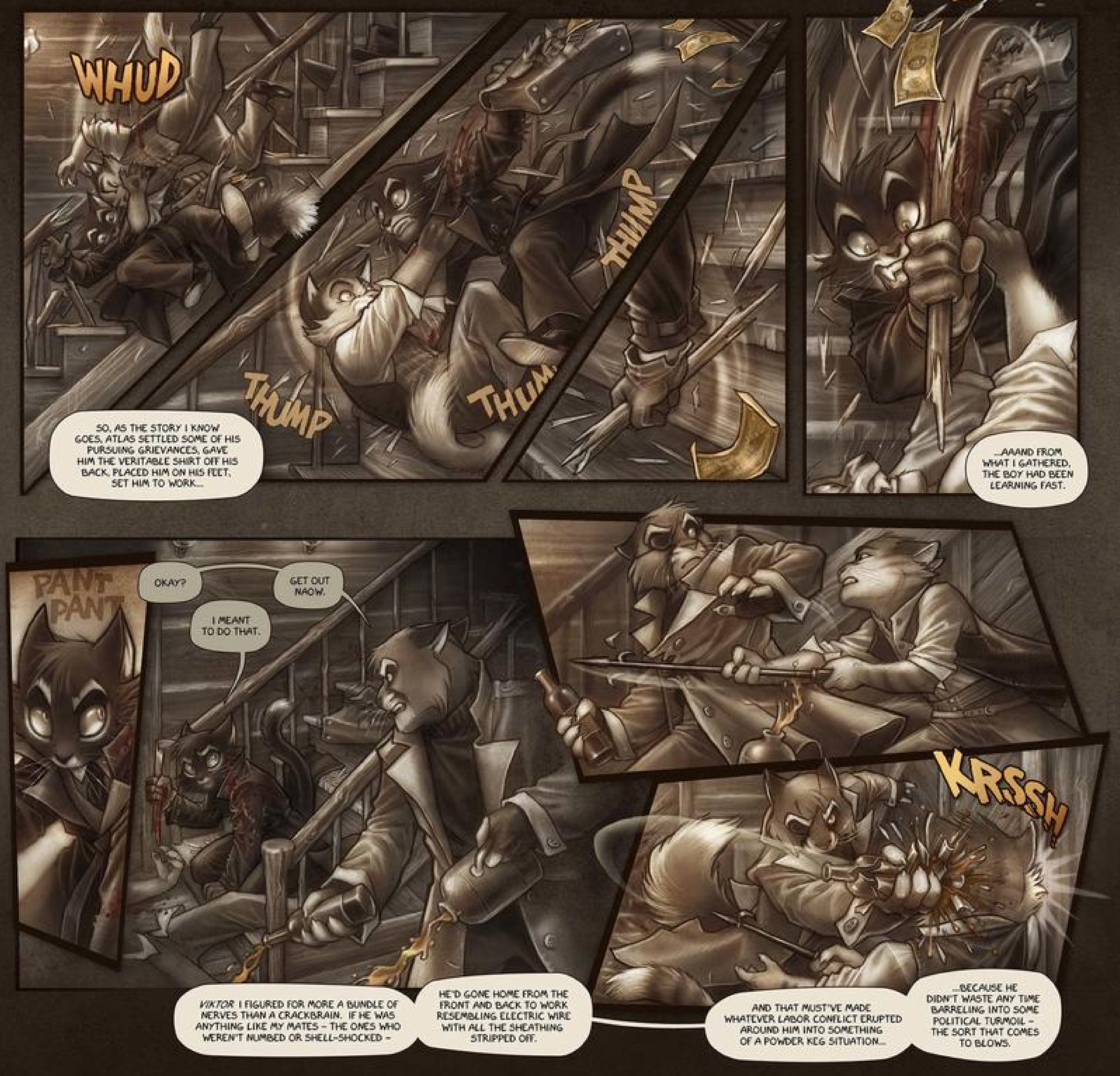

MANY TIMES! ESPECIALLY IN THE EARLY DAYS WHEN VOLSTEAD WAS THE NEWEST CRAZE, AND ATLAS WAS CARVING OUT A FOOTHOLD.
CONTRARILY, OUR POST-MORTEM SERVICES WERE A BIT SLOWER TO CATCH ON IN THE WILD. PROFIT WAS A PITTANCE... BUT ALL ATLAS SAW WAS THE HALO OF POTENTIAL.
SEE, THESE HINTERLANDS ARE DOUBLY BLESSED WITH A DEARTH OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND AN MKT RAIL DEPOT. ATLAS – LIKELY WITH THE AID OF YOUR DAD – DID SOME STRING PULLING TO MAKE SURE THE TRAIN ARRIVED BURDENED WITH BOTTLES.
OLD LOG CABIN, CUBAN RUM – THE REAL MACKAYS. I'D BET IT'S PAYING FOR THAT HIGHER EDUCATION OF YOURS NOW.
ANYWAY, AS YOU SELDOM GET A SIDEWAYS LOOK LOADING LONG BOXES OFF A TRAIN AND INTO A HEARSE, IT WAS OUR PLACE TO PICK IT UP AND STORE IT, FOR A BROKER'S PERCENTAGE.
...UNTIL SOME LOCAL CATTLE RUSTLING, TRAIN ROBBING RABBLE FIGURED ON LIQUOR BEING EASIER TO RUSTLE, AND CHAPS LIKE US BEING EASIER TO ROB.
AND THAT THEY DID.
THEY SHOT OUR ORGAN PLAYER.
IT WAS RIGHT ABOUT THEN ATLAS FIRST BROUGHT LEFTY AND RIGHTY UP HERE TO SORT THINGS OUT.
THEY JUST SAT THEMSELVES DOWN AT THE ONE GENERAL STORE IN TOWN AND PLAYED CHESS UNTIL, INEVITABLY, ONE OF THOSE ROUGHNECKS SHOWED UP, NEEDING SUPPLIES.
HE WAS UNDERSTANDABLY RETICENT CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF HIS MATES...
...BUT DISCOVERED HE HAD A GOOD MANY THINGS TO DISCUSS FROM THE INTERIOR OF A PRE-OCCUPIED PINE BOX.
IT WOULD PROBABLY BE IN YOUR BETTER INTERESTS TO STOP SCREAMING AND START ENUNCIATING...
...WHILE WE CAN STILL HEAR YOU.
MFFAAAAUGHMMFTALKNGAHYES!
KRNCH

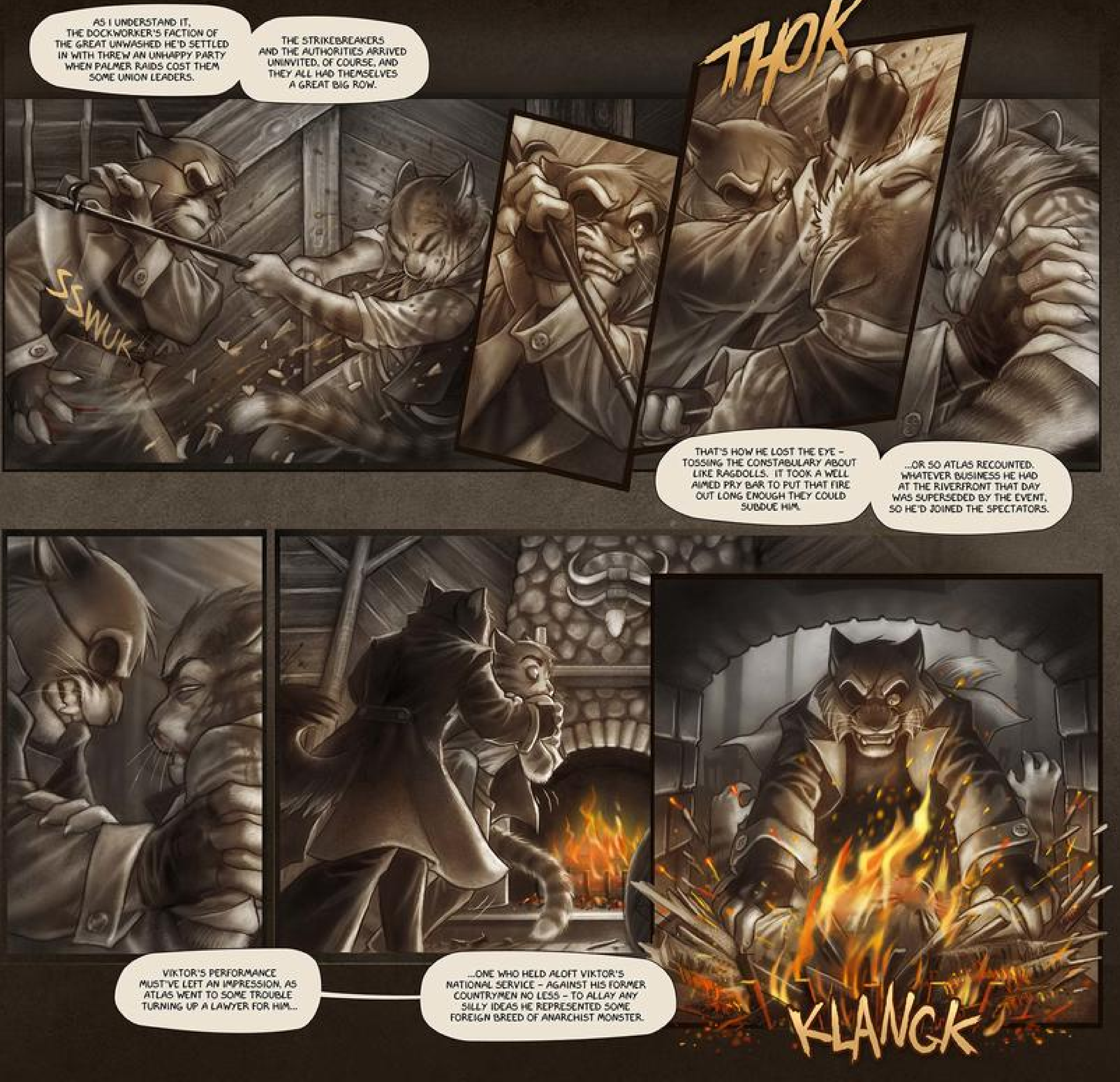

THAT'S WHEN THINGS GOT *REALLY* INTERESTING. IT TURNED OUT THIS LOT WAS PLAYING COWBOYS AND GANGSTERS WITH SOME BOYS FROM THE CITY, PEDDLING TO *THEM* WHAT THEY STOLE FROM *US*.
THIS CITY GANG – SOME SICILIANS OR SOMETHING – WELL, ATLAS HAPPENED TO KNOW THEY WERE IN THE MIDST OF A TURF WAR WITH A THEN-BLOSSOMING ESTABLISHMENT YOU MIGHT KNOW AS MARIGOLD.
AND THERE WAS THIS LODGE UP IN THE HILLS HERE WHERE
DON'T TELL HER THESE AWFUL STORIES, BOBBY.
IT'S A BLOODY GOOD STORY! BESIDES, SHE ALMOST BLEW US AWAY EARLIER.
I MEAN, YOU KNOW WHAT'S WHAT, DON'T YOU?
UH, Y— OF COURSE I —
TELL ME MORE.
AWRIGHT, AWRIGHT. WHAT WAS I GETTING AT? OH – THE LODGE TUCKED BACK HERE, IN THE NOWHERE. THE COUNTRY MICE AND CITY MICE HAD BEEN MEETING THERE TO MAKE THEIR EXCHANGES.
NEWLY PRIVY TO THAT, ATLAS DECIDED HE'D MAKE A RATHER BOLD GESTURE OF CONFRONTING OUR NUISANCE *AND* DOING MARIGOLD AN UNSOLICITED FAVOR.
IN A BUSINESS OF BITTER ENEMIES, IT DOESN'T HURT TO MAKE A FRIEND, YEAH?
ANYWAY, IN THAT SPIRIT, THE CAPTIVE CATTLE THIEF WAS RETURNED TO *HIS* FRIENDS...
YOU GONNA JUST STAND THERE IN THE THRESHOLD?
BEHIND ME, *BEHIND ME*
WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN? YOU SMELL LIKE DEATH.
WHAK
...WITH A SOUVENIR FROM THE WAR.

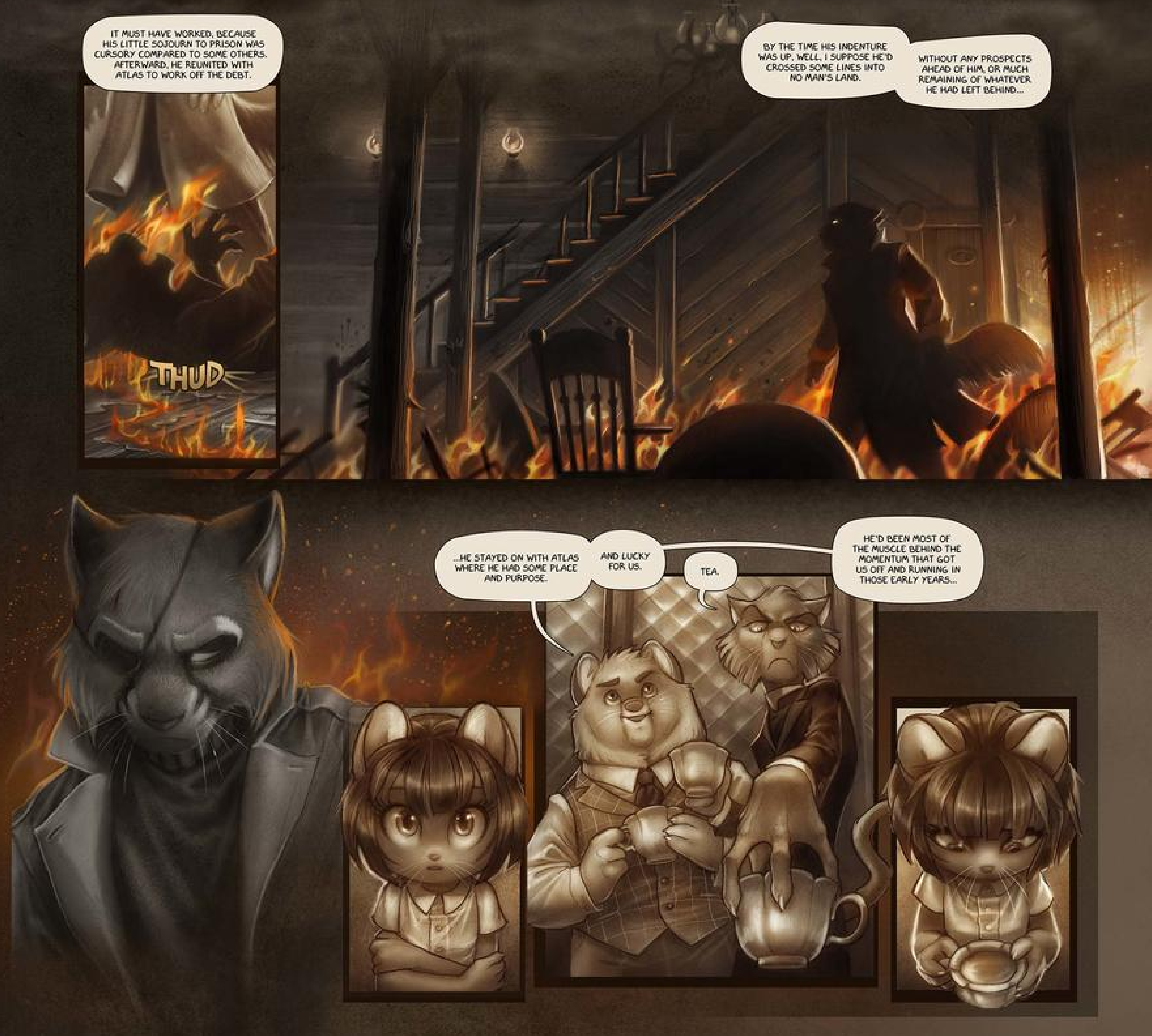

BOOM
BAM
BLAM
THEN VIKTOR AND MORDECAI MADE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE PLACE LIKE A MINOR TORNADO.
VIKTOR WAS SOMETHING OF A REMNANT FROM THE WAR HIMSELF...
KRAK
BAM
KCH
...AND MORDECAI... WELL, COME TO THINK OF IT, HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN VERY MUCH OLDER THAN YOU AT THE TIME.

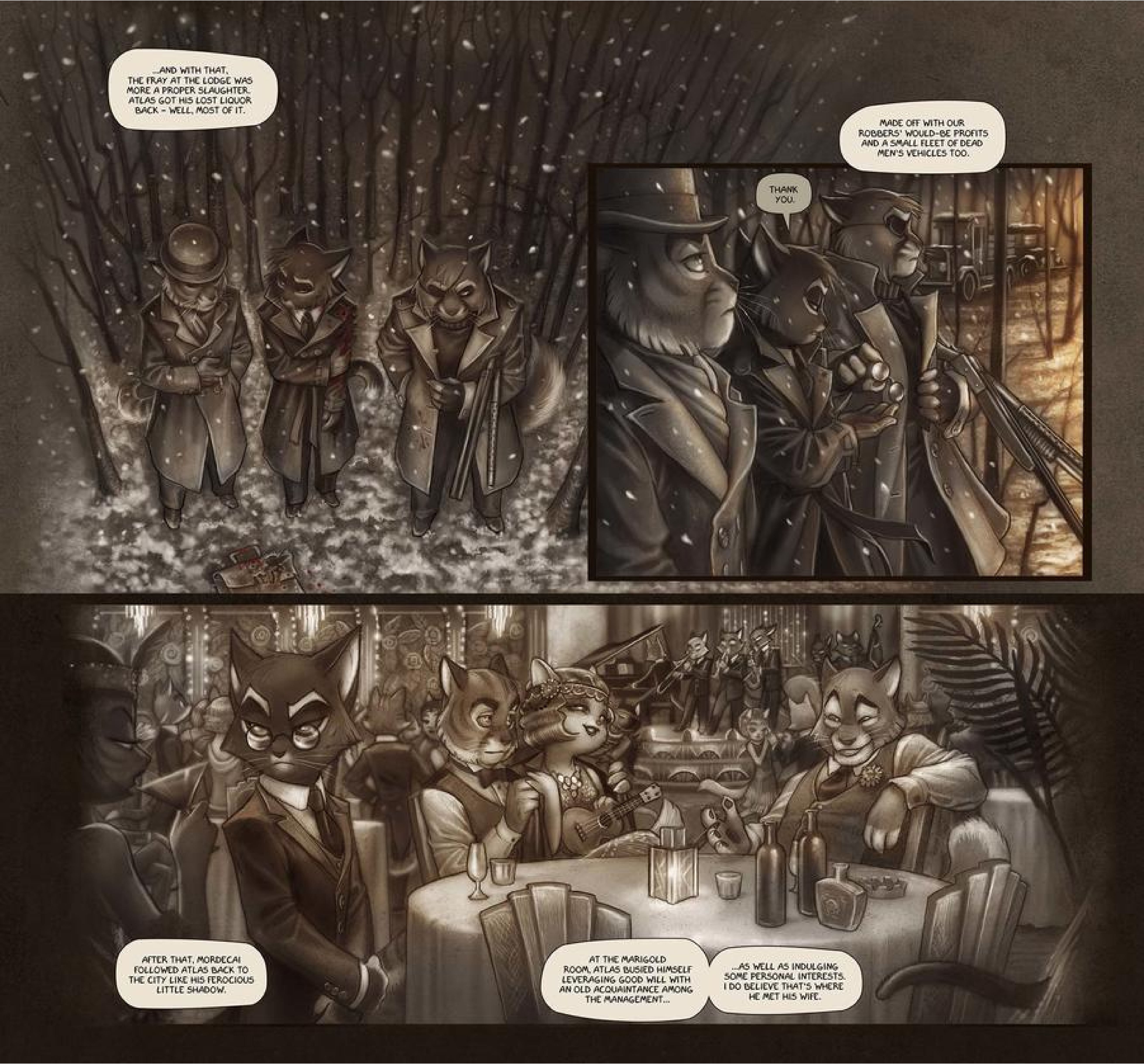

BAM
BAM
HE'D HAD AN EARLY START, THOUGH – SUPPOSEDLY STILL IN KNEE PANTS WHEN HE BEGAN KEEPING BOOKS FOR GRIFTERS AND GAMBLERS IN NEW YORK.
BANG
BAM
BANG
BUT THINGS MUST'VE SOURED FOR HIM THERE. ATLAS SAID WHEN HE CROSSED HIS PATH, HE WAS LOOKING RATHER WORSE FOR WEAR...
...RIDING A GETAWAY TRAIN TOWARD CHICAGO OR DETROIT WITH SOME DEEPLY UNHAPPY ASSOCIATES ON HIS HEELS.
BANG
IT WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME TO LEARN THAT, LEFT TO HIS OWN AGENCIES, HE'D BROUGHT HIS TROUBLES ON HIMSELF.
FOR ALL HIS QUALIFICATIONS WITH BOOKS AND ODDS AND PERCENTAGES AND WHAT...

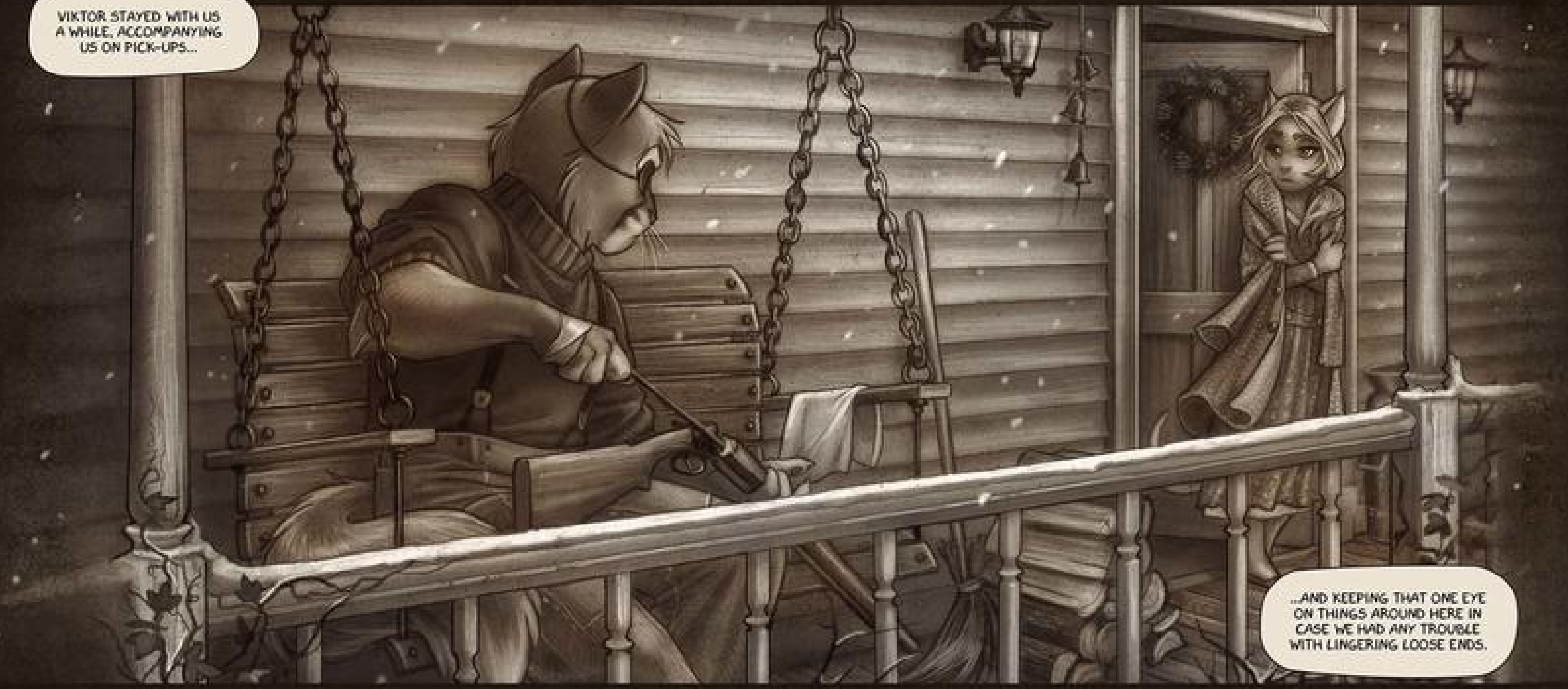

BANG BANG
BLAM
…HE'D ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT AS PERSONABLE AS A BESPECTACLED BARBED WIRE POST, AND LIKELY TALLIED UP MORE ENEMIES THAN FRIENDS.
BLAM
I'VE HEARD IT SAID SOME LONG-AGO INCIDENT LEFT A LITTLE BIT OF LEAD RATTLING ABOUT HIS CRANIUM, AND CARVED HIM THAT WONKY STREAK…
KRRCH
WHOK
CREEEEK
BANG
…BUT I NEVER HAD THE GALL TO ASK HIM MYSELF IF THAT WAS TRUE.
I *CAN* TELL YOU ATLAS DIDN'T SEE THE, UH, PERSONALITY PROBLEM AS *A PROBLEM* SO MUCH AS A FACILITY WORTH FOSTERING, HOWEVER.

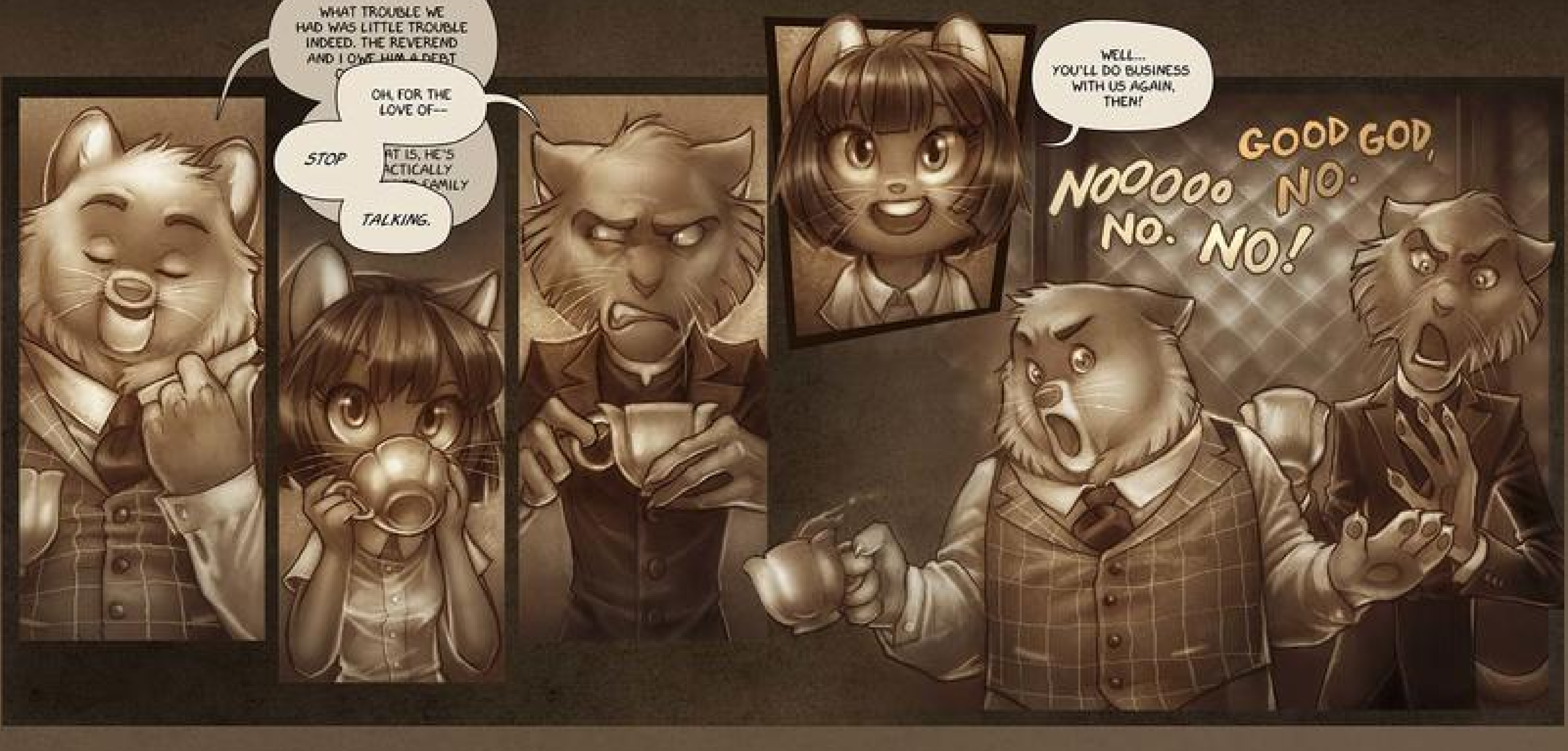

WHUD
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
SO, AS THE STORY I KNOW GOES, ATLAS SETTLED SOME OF HIS PURSUING GRIEVANCES, GAVE HIM THE VERITABLE SHIRT OFF HIS BACK, PLACED HIM ON HIS FEET, SET HIM TO WORK…
…AAAND FROM WHAT I GATHERED, THE BOY HAD BEEN LEARNING FAST.
PANT PANT
OKAY?
GET OUT NAOW.
I MEANT TO DO THAT.
KRSSH
VIKTOR I FIGURED FOR MORE A BUNDLE OF NERVES THAN A CRACKBRAIN. IF HE WAS ANYTHING LIKE MY MATES – THE ONES WHO WEREN'T NUMBED OR SHELL-SHOCKED –
HE'D GONE HOME FROM THE FRONT AND BACK TO WORK RESEMBLING ELECTRIC WIRE WITH ALL THE SHEATHING STRIPPED OFF.
AND THAT MUST'VE MADE WHATEVER LABOR CONFLICT ERUPTED AROUND HIM INTO SOMETHING OF A POWDER KEG SITUATION…
…BECAUSE HE DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME BARRELING INTO SOME POLITICAL TURMOIL – THE SORT THAT COMES TO BLOWS.

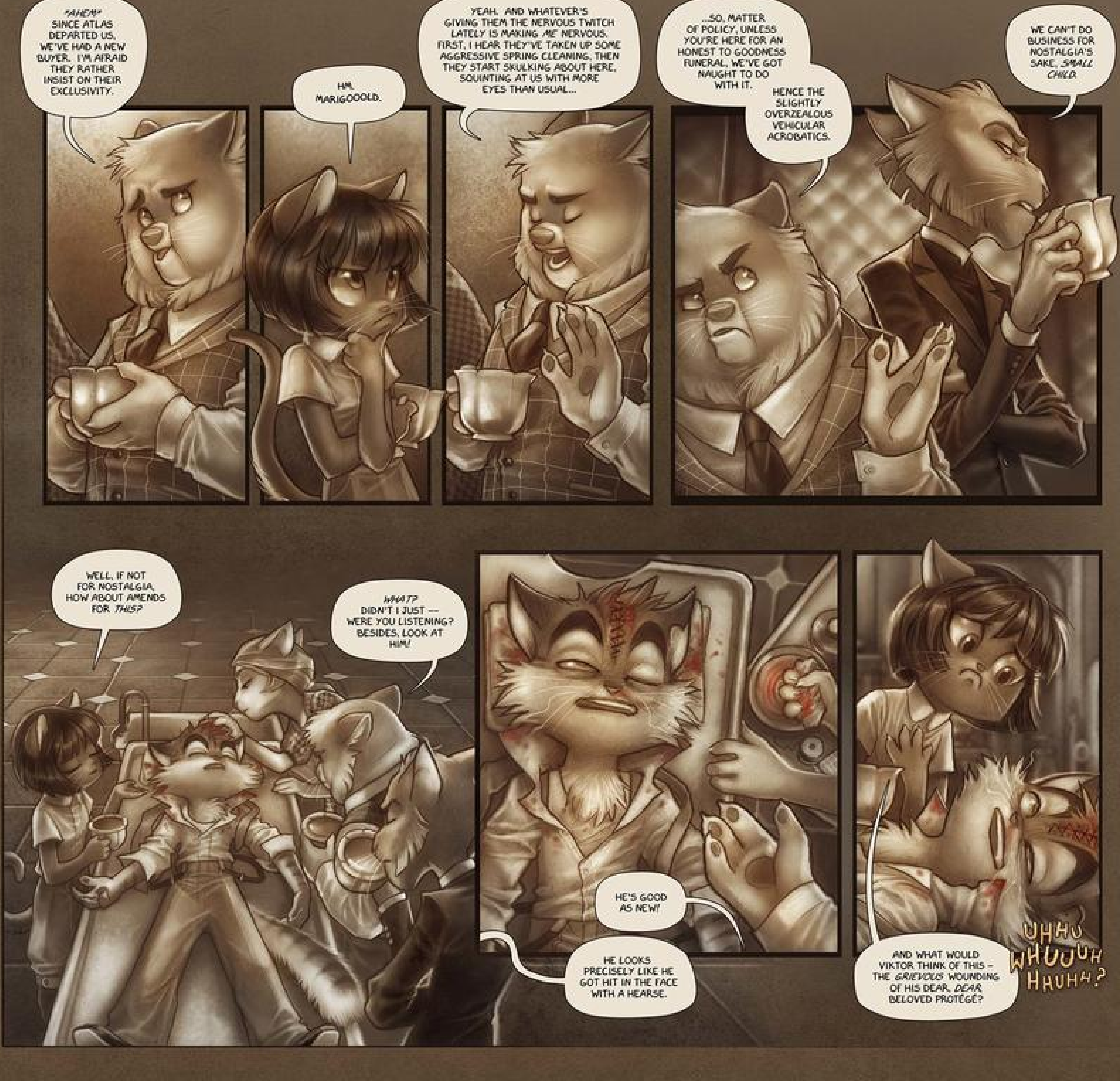

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE DOCKWORKER'S FACTION OF THE GREAT UNWASHED HE'D SETTLED IN WITH THREW AN UNHAPPY PARTY WHEN PALMER RAIDS COST THEM SOME UNION LEADERS.
THE STRIKEBREAKERS AND THE AUTHORITIES ARRIVED UNINVITED, OF COURSE, AND THEY ALL HAD THEMSELVES A GREAT BIG ROW.
THOK
SSWUK
THAT'S HOW HE LOST THE EYE – TOSSING THE CONSTABULARY ABOUT LIKE RAGDOLLS. IT TOOK A WELL AIMED PRY BAR TO PUT THAT FIRE OUT LONG ENOUGH THEY COULD SUBDUE HIM.
...OR SO ATLAS RECOUNTED. WHATEVER BUSINESS HE HAD AT THE RIVERFRONT THAT DAY WAS SUPERSEDED BY THE EVENT, SO HE'D JOINED THE SPECTATORS.
VIKTOR'S PERFORMANCE MUST'VE LEFT AN IMPRESSION, AS ATLAS WENT TO SOME TROUBLE TURNING UP A LAWYER FOR HIM...
...ONE WHO HELD ALOFT VIKTOR'S NATIONAL SERVICE – AGAINST HIS FORMER COUNTRYMEN NO LESS – TO ALLAY ANY SILLY IDEAS HE REPRESENTED SOME FOREIGN BREED OF ANARCHIST MONSTER.
KLANGK

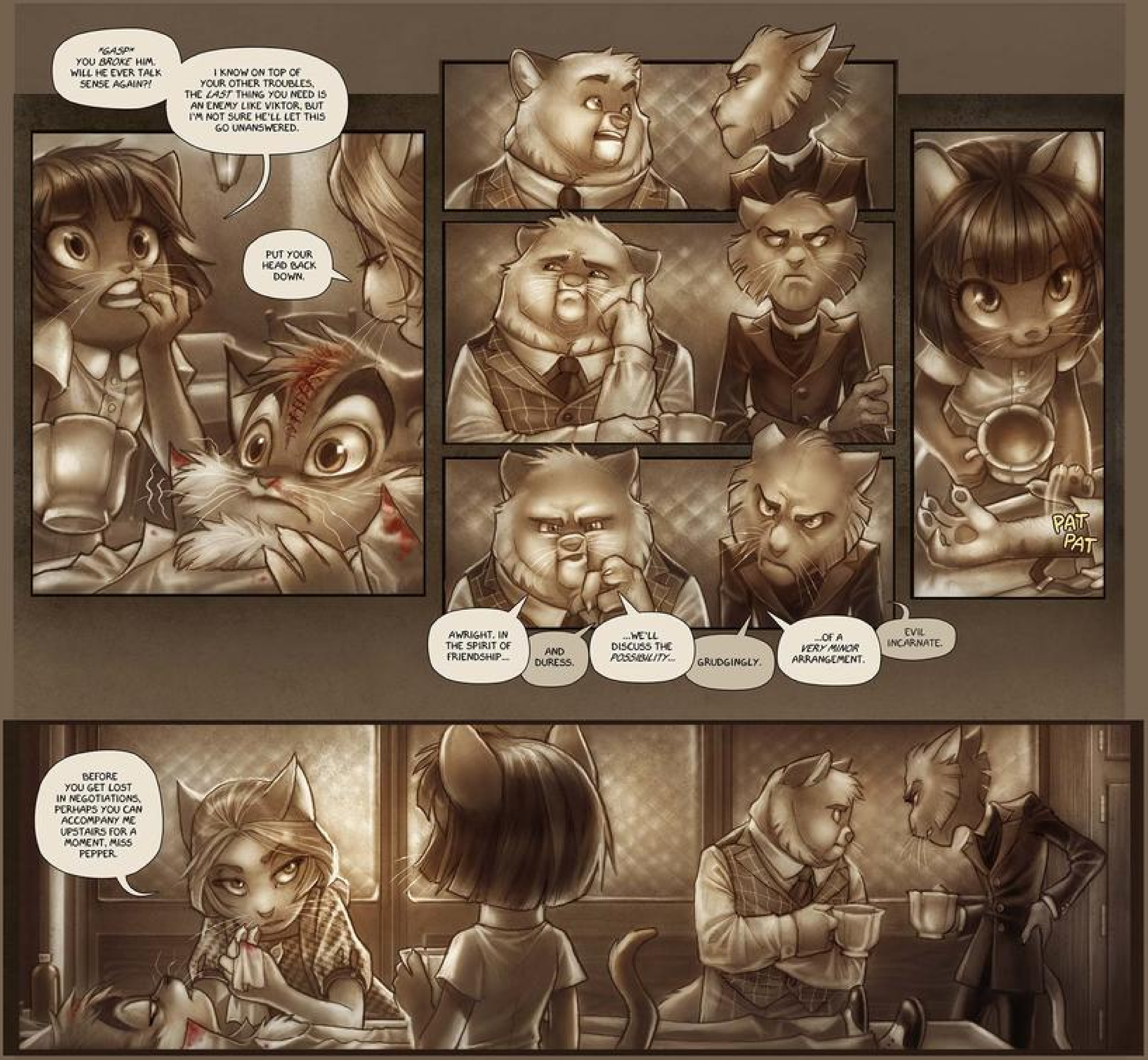

IT MUST HAVE WORKED, BECAUSE HIS LITTLE SOJOURN TO PRISON WAS CURSORY COMPARED TO SOME OTHERS. AFTERWARD, HE REUNITED WITH ATLAS TO WORK OFF THE DEBT.
THUD
BY THE TIME HIS INDENTURE WAS UP, WELL, I SUPPOSE HE'D CROSSED SOME LINES INTO NO MAN'S LAND.
WITHOUT ANY PROSPECTS AHEAD OF HIM, OR MUCH REMAINING OF WHATEVER HE HAD LEFT BEHIND...
...HE STAYED ON WITH ATLAS WHERE HE HAD SOME PLACE AND PURPOSE.
AND LUCKY FOR US.
TEA.
HE'D BEEN MOST OF THE MUSCLE BEHIND THE MOMENTUM THAT GOT US OFF AND RUNNING IN THOSE EARLY YEARS...

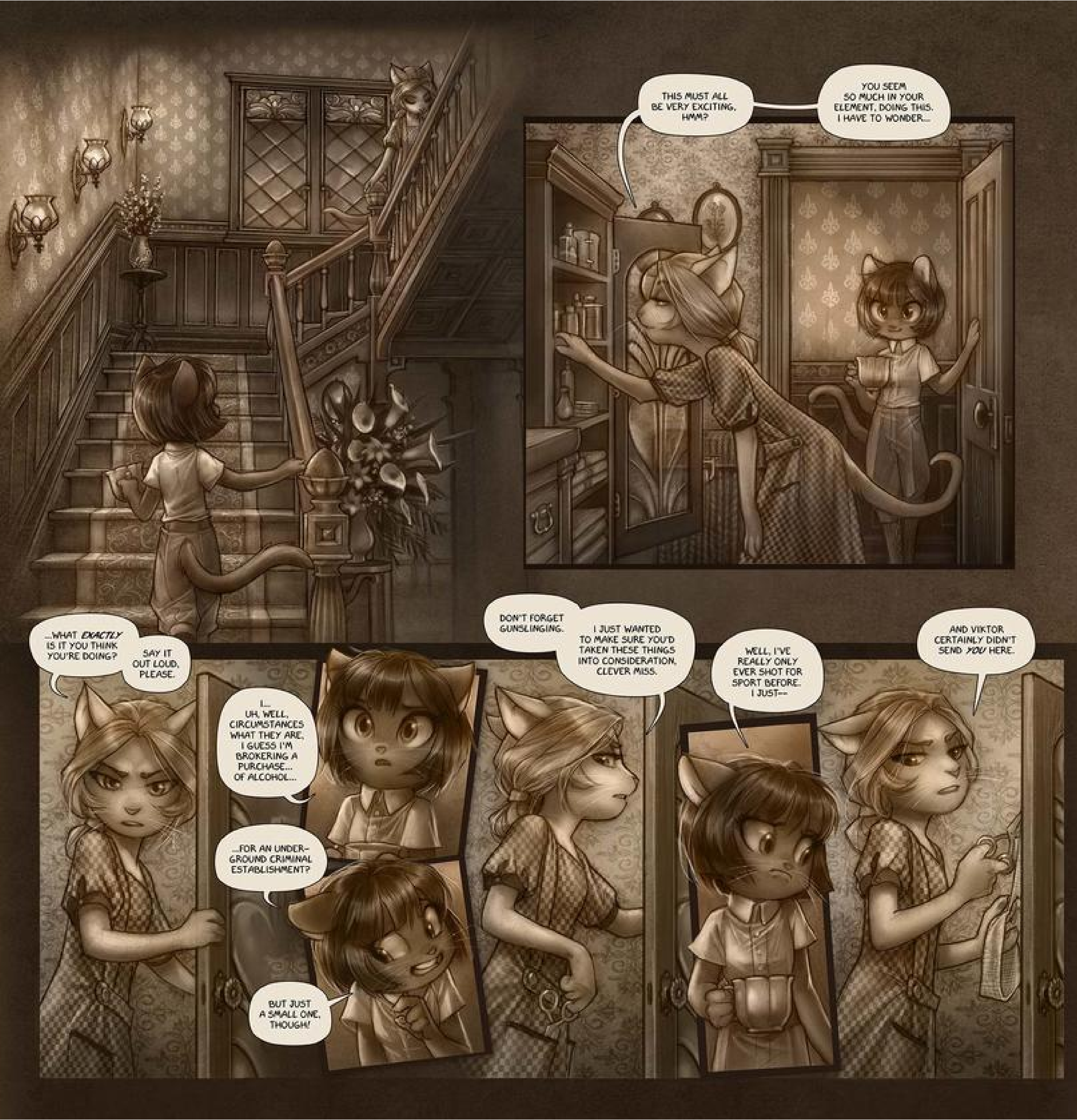

...AND WITH THAT, THE FRAY AT THE LODGE WAS MORE A PROPER SLAUGHTER. ATLAS GOT HIS LOST LIQUOR BACK – WELL, MOST OF IT.
MADE OFF WITH OUR ROBBERS' WOULD-BE PROFITS AND A SMALL FLEET OF DEAD MEN'S VEHICLES TOO.
THANK YOU.
AFTER THAT, MORDECAI FOLLOWED ATLAS BACK TO THE CITY LIKE HIS FEROCIOUS LITTLE SHADOW.
AT THE MARIGOLD ROOM, ATLAS BUSIED HIMSELF LEVERAGING GOOD WILL WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE AMONG THE MANAGEMENT...
...AS WELL AS INDULGING SOME PERSONAL INTERESTS. I DO BELIEVE THAT'S WHERE HE MET HIS WIFE.

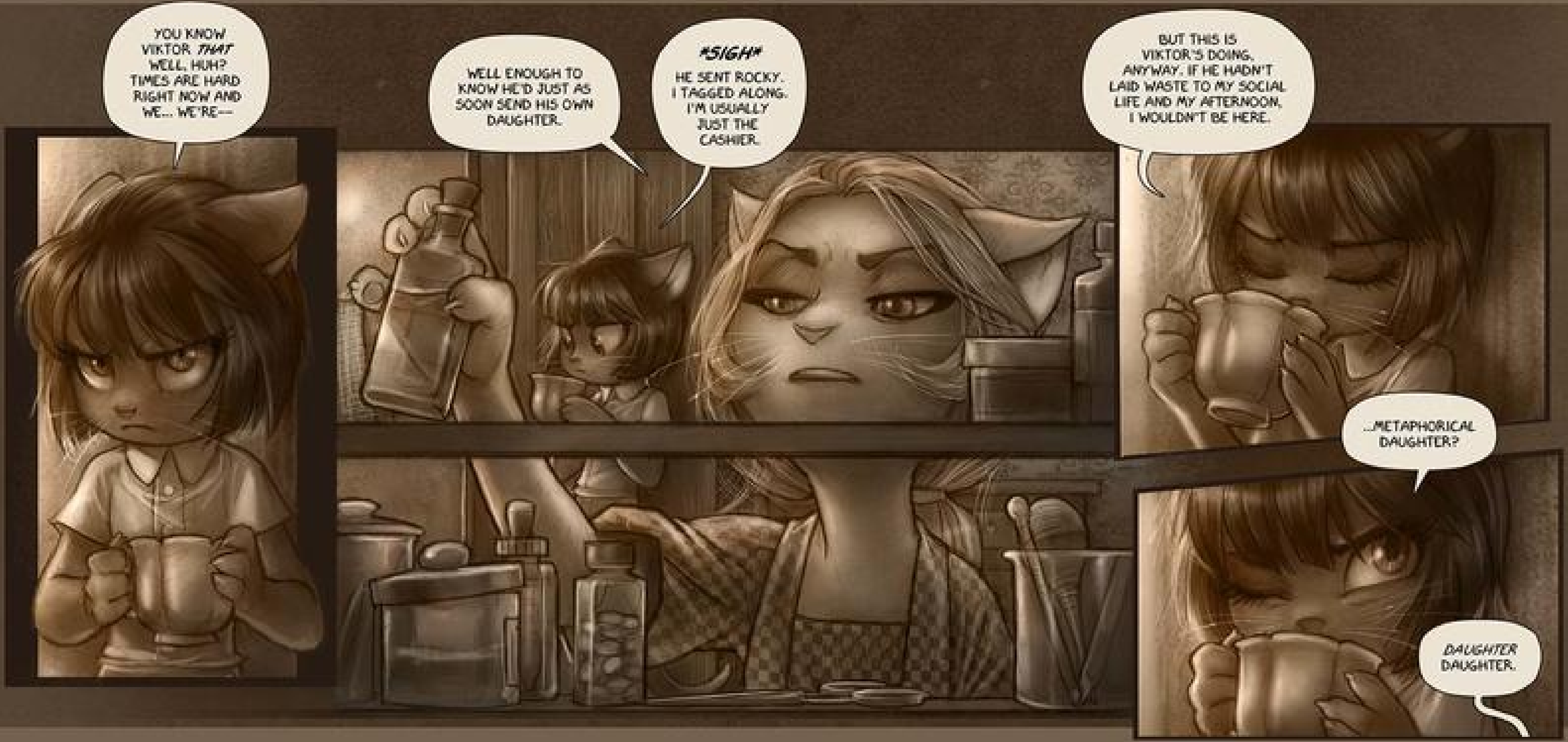

VIKTOR STAYED WITH US A WHILE, ACCOMPANYING US ON PICK-UPS...
...AND KEEPING THAT ONE EYE ON THINGS AROUND HERE IN CASE WE HAD ANY TROUBLE WITH LINGERING LOOSE ENDS.

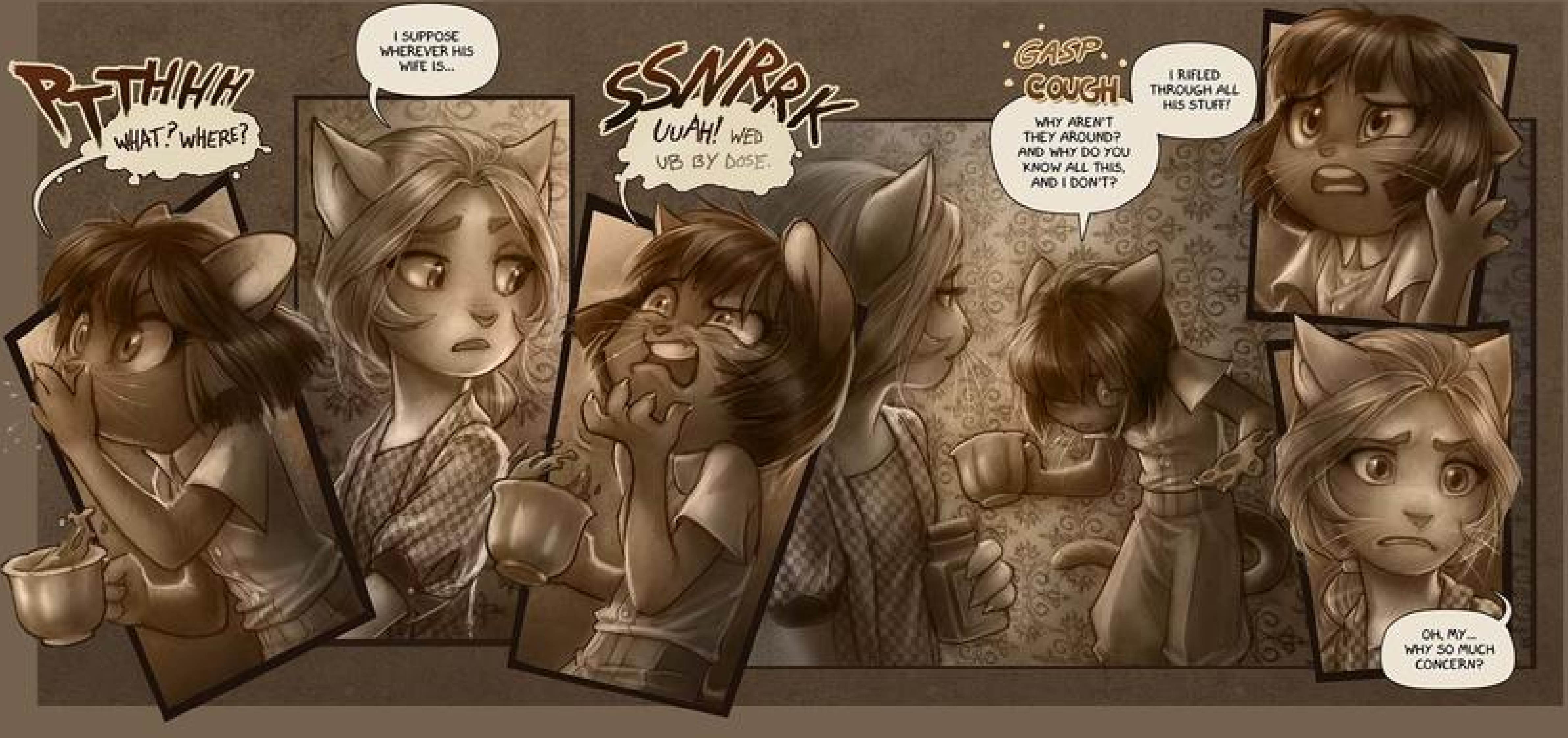

WHAT TROUBLE WE HAD WAS LITTLE TROUBLE INDEED. THE REVEREND AND I OWE HIM A DEBT
OH, FOR THE LOVE OF--
AT IS, HE'S ACTICALLY FAMILY
STOP
TALKING.
WELL... YOU'LL DO BUSINESS WITH US AGAIN, THEN!
GOOD GOD,
NOOOOO NO.
NO. NO!

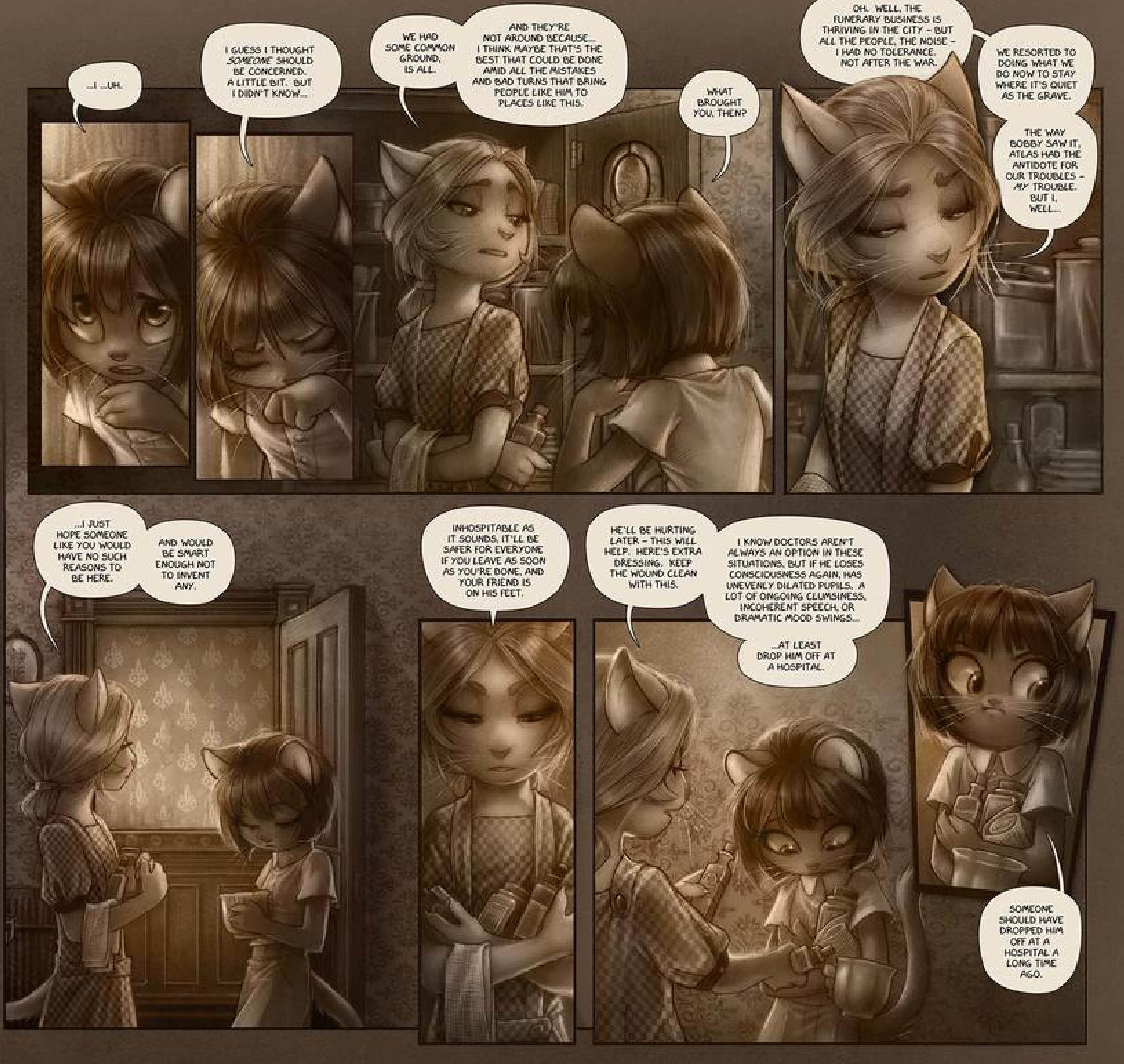

AHEM SINCE ATLAS DEPARTED US, WE'VE HAD A NEW BUYER. I'M AFRAID THEY RATHER INSIST ON THEIR EXCLUSIVITY.
HM. MARIGOOOLD.
YEAH. AND WHATEVER'S GIVING THEM THE NERVOUS TWITCH LATELY IS MAKING *ME* NERVOUS. FIRST, I HEAR THEY'VE TAKEN UP SOME AGGRESSIVE SPRING CLEANING, THEN THEY START SKULKING ABOUT HERE, SQUINTING AT US WITH MORE EYES THAN USUAL...
...SO, MATTER OF POLICY, UNLESS YOU'RE HERE FOR AN HONEST TO GOODNESS FUNERAL, WE'VE GOT NAUGHT TO DO WITH IT.
HENCE THE SLIGHTLY OVERZEALOUS VEHICULAR ACROBATICS.
WE CAN'T DO BUSINESS FOR NOSTALGIA'S SAKE, *SMALL CHILD.*
WELL, IF NOT FOR NOSTALGIA, HOW ABOUT AMENDS FOR *THIS?*
WHAT? DIDN'T I JUST -- WERE YOU LISTENING? BESIDES, LOOK AT HIM!
HE'S GOOD AS NEW!
HE LOOKS PRECISELY LIKE HE GOT HIT IN THE FACE WITH A HEARSE.
AND WHAT WOULD VIKTOR THINK OF THIS – THE *GRIEVOUS* WOUNDING OF HIS DEAR, *DEAR* BELOVED PROTÉGÉ?
UHHU WHUUUH HHUHH?

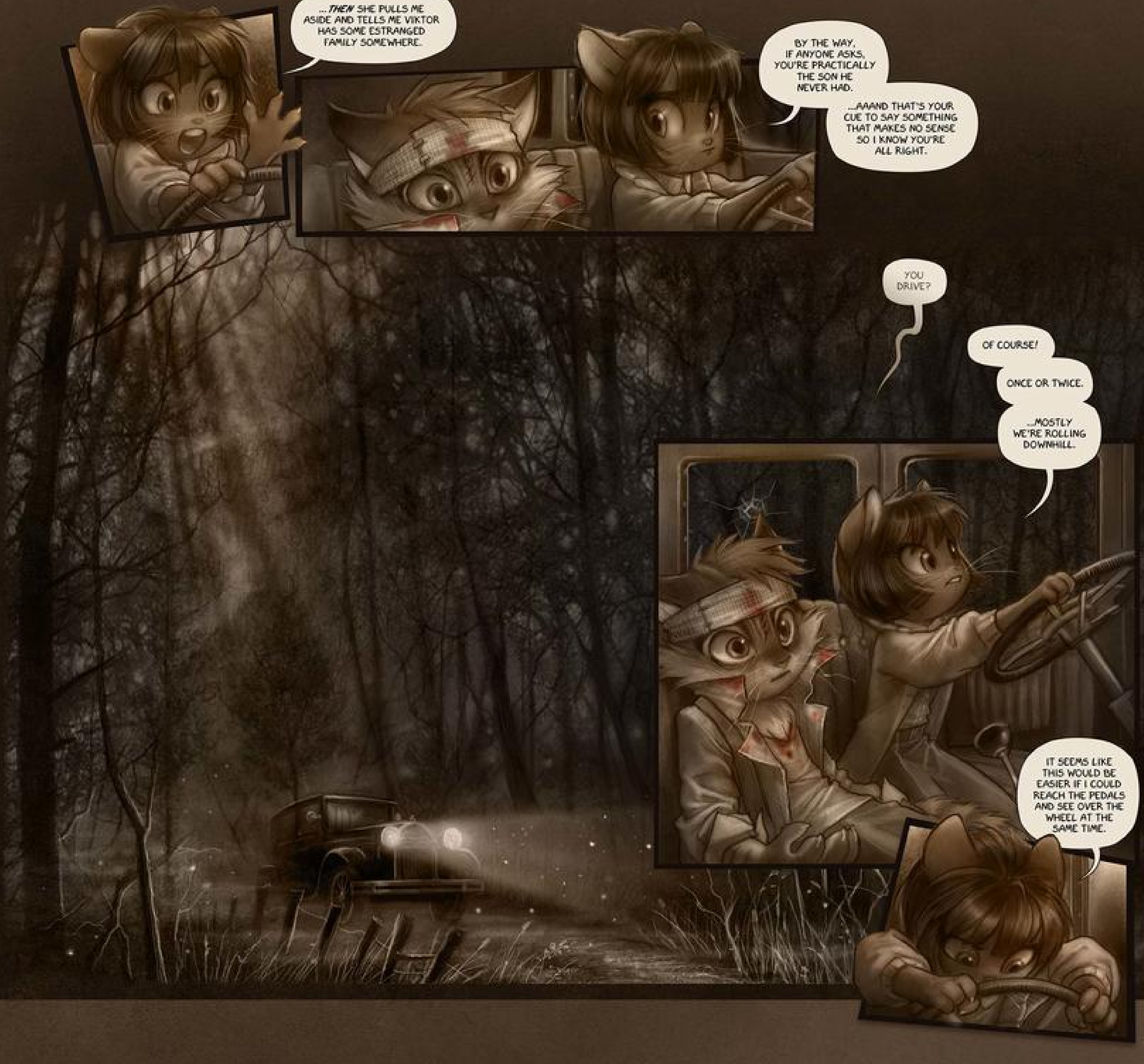

GASP YOU *BROKE* HIM. WILL HE EVER TALK SENSE AGAIN?!
I KNOW ON TOP OF YOUR OTHER TROUBLES, THE *LAST* THING YOU NEED IS AN ENEMY LIKE VIKTOR, BUT I'M NOT SURE HE'LL LET THIS GO UNANSWERED.
PUT YOUR HEAD BACK DOWN.
PAT PAT
AWRIGHT. IN THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP...
AND DURESS.
...WE'LL DISCUSS THE *POSSIBILITY*...
GRUDGINGLY.
...OF A *VERY MINOR* ARRANGEMENT.
EVIL INCARNATE.
BEFORE YOU GET LOST IN NEGOTIATIONS, PERHAPS YOU CAN ACCOMPANY ME UPSTAIRS FOR A MOMENT, MISS PEPPER.

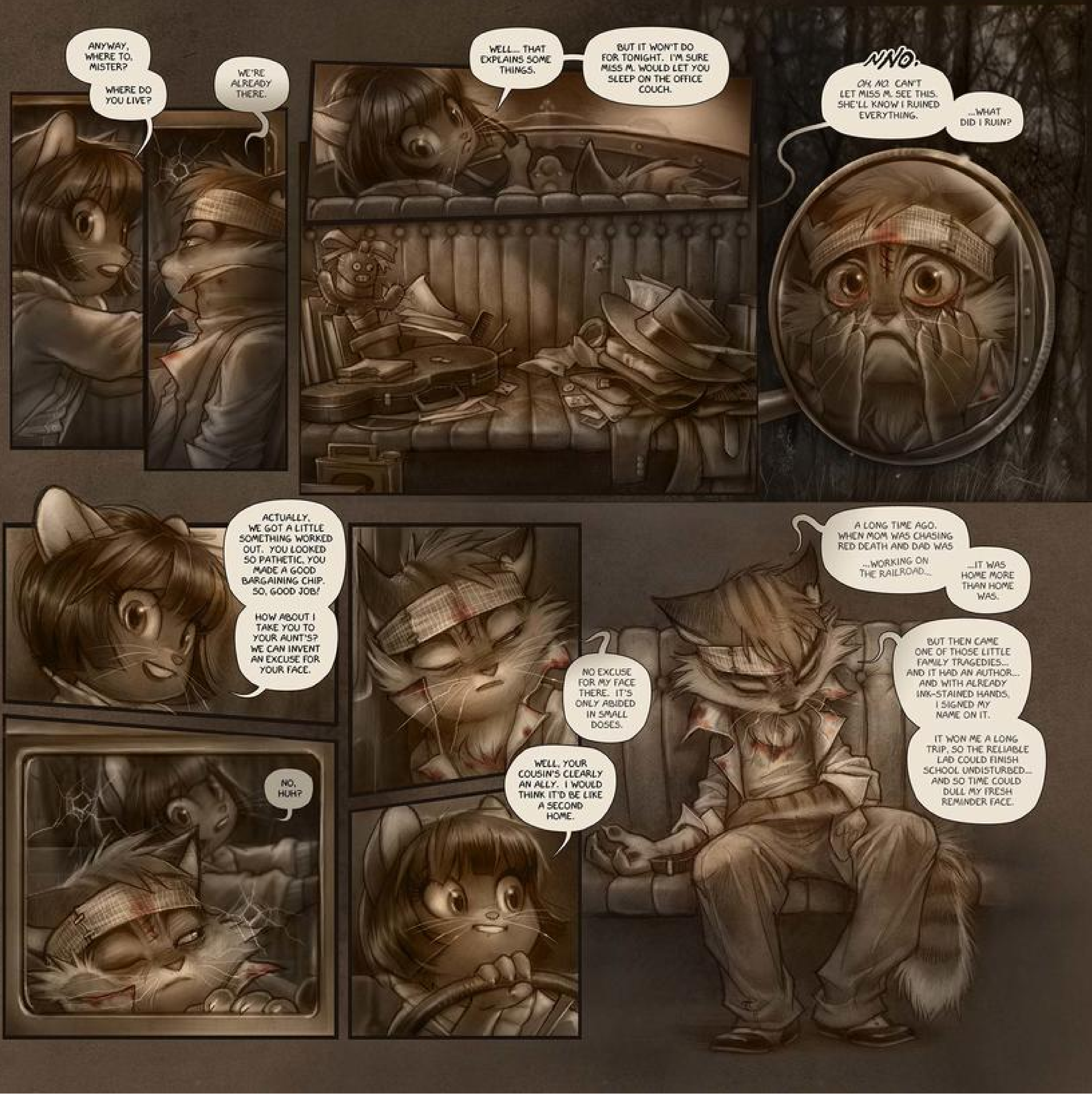

THIS MUST ALL BE VERY EXCITING, HMM?
YOU SEEM SO MUCH IN YOUR ELEMENT, DOING THIS. I HAVE TO WONDER...
...WHAT *EXACTLY* IS IT YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
SAY IT OUT LOUD, PLEASE.
I... UH, WELL, CIRCUMSTANCES WHAT THEY ARE, I GUESS I'M BROKERING A PURCHASE... OF ALCOHOL...
...FOR AN UNDERGROUND CRIMINAL ESTABLISHMENT?
BUT JUST A SMALL ONE, THOUGH!
DON'T FORGET GUNSLINGING.
I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU'D TAKEN THESE THINGS INTO CONSIDERATION, CLEVER MISS.
WELL, I'VE *REALLY* ONLY EVER SHOT FOR SPORT BEFORE. I JUST--
AND VIKTOR CERTAINLY DIDN'T SEND *YOU* HERE.

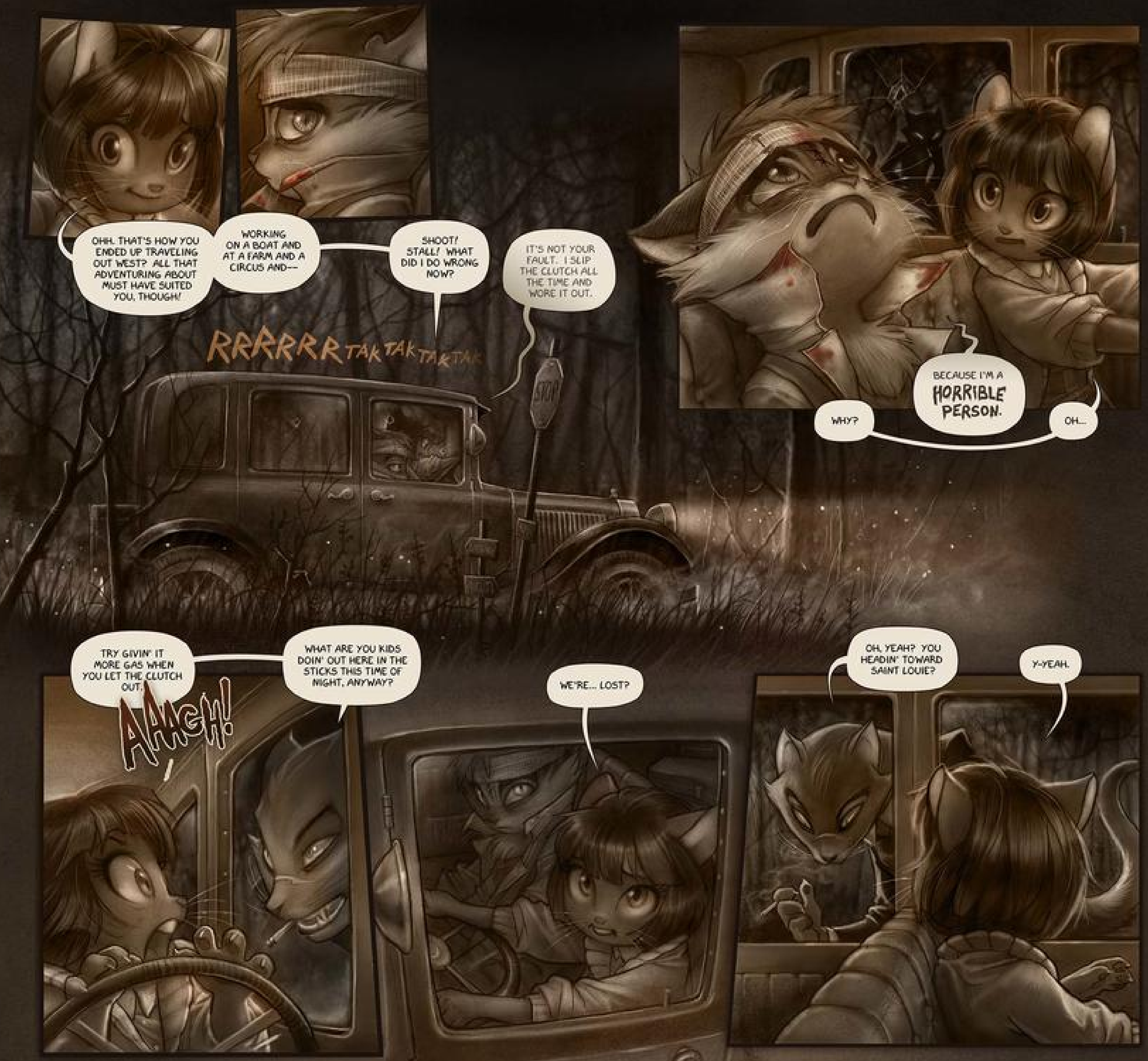

YOU KNOW VIKTOR *THAT* WELL, HUH? TIMES ARE HARD RIGHT NOW AND WE... WE'RE--
WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW HE'D JUST AS SOON SEND HIS OWN DAUGHTER.
SIGH HE SENT ROCKY. I TAGGED ALONG. I'M USUALLY JUST THE CASHIER.
BUT THIS IS VIKTOR'S DOING, ANYWAY. IF HE HADN'T LAID WASTE TO MY SOCIAL LIFE AND MY AFTERNOON, I WOULDN'T BE HERE.
...METAPHORICAL DAUGHTER?
DAUGHTER DAUGHTER.

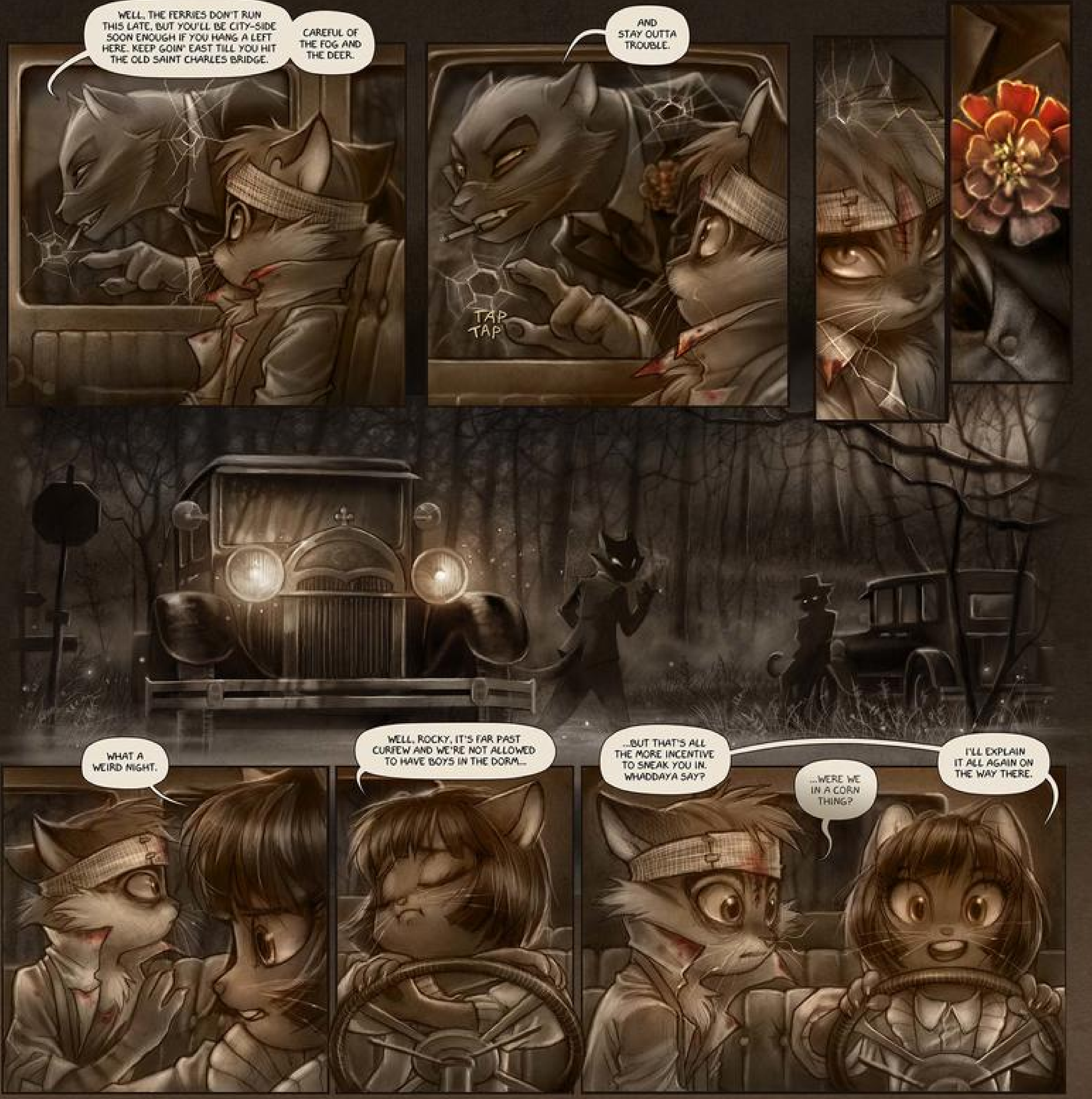

PTTHHH
WHAT? WHERE?
I SUPPOSE WHEREVER HIS WIFE IS...
SSNRRK
UUAH! WED UB BY DOSE.
GASP
COUGH
WHY AREN'T THEY AROUND? AND WHY DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS, AND I DON'T?
I RIFLED THROUGH ALL HIS STUFF!
OH, MY... WHY SO MUCH CONCERN?

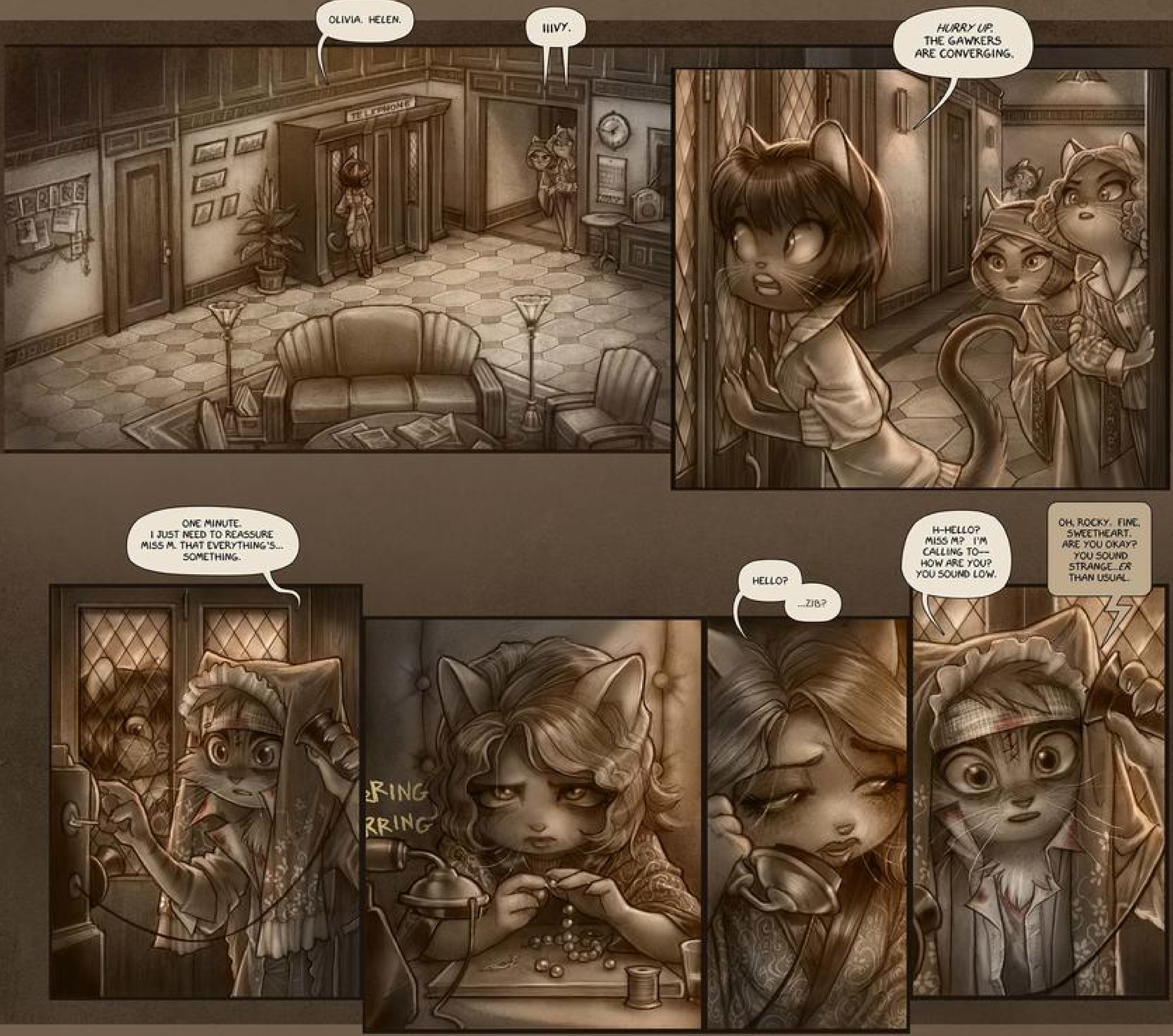

...I ...UH.
I GUESS I THOUGHT *SOMEONE* SHOULD BE CONCERNED. A LITTLE BIT. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW...
WE HAD SOME COMMON GROUND, IS ALL.
AND THEY'RE NOT AROUND BECAUSE... I THINK MAYBE THAT'S THE BEST THAT COULD BE DONE AMID ALL THE MISTAKES AND BAD TURNS THAT BRING PEOPLE LIKE HIM TO PLACES LIKE THIS.
WHAT BROUGHT YOU, THEN?
OH. WELL, THE FUNERARY BUSINESS IS THRIVING IN THE CITY – BUT ALL THE PEOPLE, THE NOISE – I HAD NO TOLERANCE. NOT AFTER THE WAR.
WE RESORTED TO DOING WHAT WE DO NOW TO STAY WHERE IT'S QUIET AS THE GRAVE.
THE WAY BOBBY SAW IT, ATLAS HAD THE ANTIDOTE FOR OUR TROUBLES – *MY* TROUBLE. BUT I, WELL...
...I JUST HOPE SOMEONE LIKE YOU WOULD HAVE NO SUCH REASONS TO BE HERE.
AND WOULD BE SMART ENOUGH NOT TO INVENT ANY.
INHOSPITABLE AS IT SOUNDS, IT'LL BE SAFER FOR EVERYONE IF YOU LEAVE AS SOON AS YOU'RE DONE, AND YOUR FRIEND IS ON HIS FEET.
HE'LL BE HURTING LATER – THIS WILL HELP. HERE'S EXTRA DRESSING. KEEP THE WOUND CLEAN WITH THIS.
I KNOW DOCTORS AREN'T ALWAYS AN OPTION IN THESE SITUATIONS, BUT IF HE LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS AGAIN, HAS UNEVENLY DILATED PUPILS, A LOT OF ONGOING CLUMSINESS, INCOHERENT SPEECH, OR DRAMATIC MOOD SWINGS...
...AT LEAST DROP HIM OFF AT A HOSPITAL.
SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE DROPPED HIM OFF AT A HOSPITAL A LONG TIME AGO.

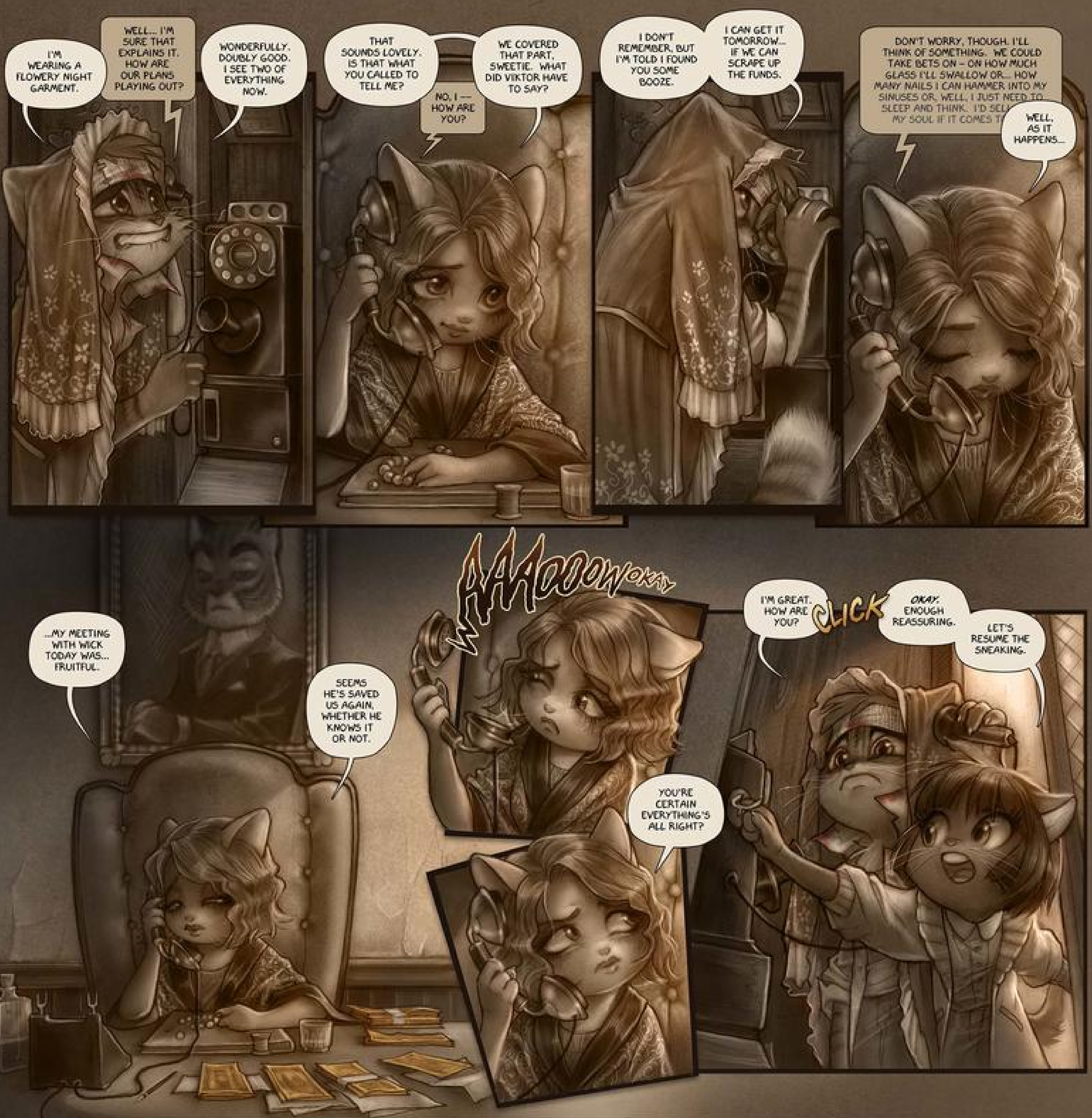

...*THEN* SHE PULLS ME ASIDE AND TELLS ME VIKTOR HAS SOME ESTRANGED FAMILY SOMEWHERE.
BY THE WAY, IF ANYONE ASKS, YOU'RE PRACTICALLY THE SON HE NEVER HAD.
...AAAND THAT'S YOUR CUE TO SAY SOMETHING THAT MAKES NO SENSE SO I KNOW YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
YOU DRIVE?
OF COURSE!
ONCE OR TWICE.
...MOSTLY WE'RE ROLLING DOWNHILL.
IT SEEMS LIKE THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF I COULD REACH THE PEDALS AND SEE OVER THE WHEEL AT THE SAME TIME.

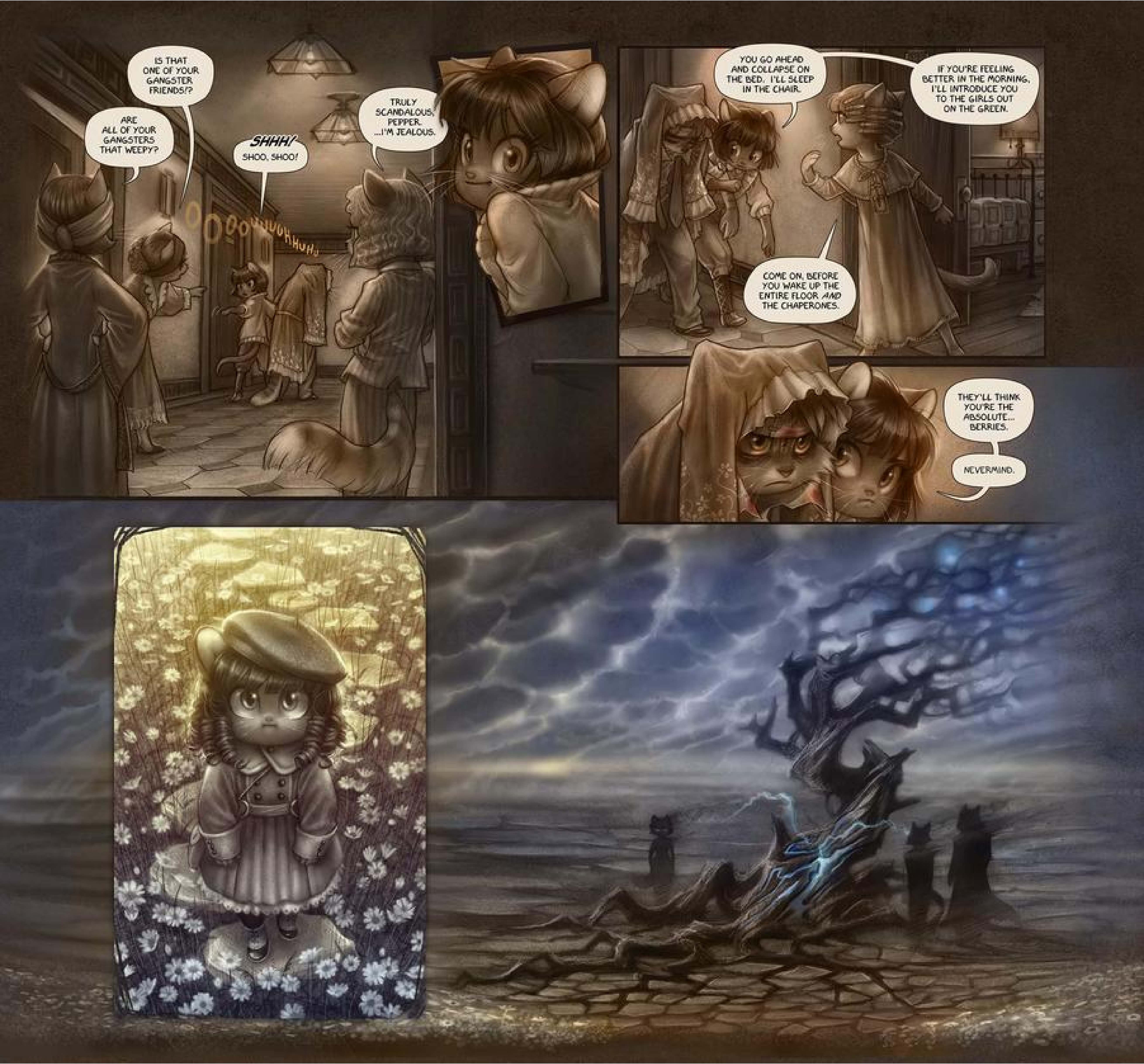

ANYWAY, WHERE TO, MISTER?
WHERE DO YOU LIVE?
WE'RE ALREADY THERE.
WELL... THAT EXPLAINS SOME THINGS.
BUT IT WON'T DO FOR TONIGHT. I'M SURE MISS M. WOULD LET YOU SLEEP ON THE OFFICE COUCH.
NNO.
OH, NO. CAN'T LET MISS M. SEE THIS. SHE'LL KNOW I RUINED EVERYTHING.
...WHAT DID I RUIN?
ACTUALLY, WE GOT A LITTLE SOMETHING WORKED OUT. YOU LOOKED SO PATHETIC, YOU MADE A GOOD BARGAINING CHIP. SO, GOOD JOB!
HOW ABOUT I TAKE YOU TO YOUR AUNT'S? WE CAN INVENT AN EXCUSE FOR YOUR FACE.
NO, HUH?
NO EXCUSE FOR MY FACE THERE. IT'S ONLY ABIDED IN SMALL DOSES.
WELL, YOUR COUSIN'S CLEARLY AN ALLY. I WOULD THINK IT'D BE LIKE A SECOND HOME.
A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN MOM WAS CHASING RED DEATH AND DAD WAS
...WORKING ON THE RAILROAD...
...IT WAS HOME MORE THAN HOME WAS.
BUT THEN CAME ONE OF THOSE LITTLE FAMILY TRAGEDIES... AND IT HAD AN AUTHOR... AND WITH ALREADY INK-STAINED HANDS, I SIGNED MY NAME ON IT.
IT WON ME A LONG TRIP, SO THE RELIABLE LAD COULD FINISH SCHOOL UNDISTURBED... AND SO TIME COULD DULL MY FRESH REMINDER FACE.

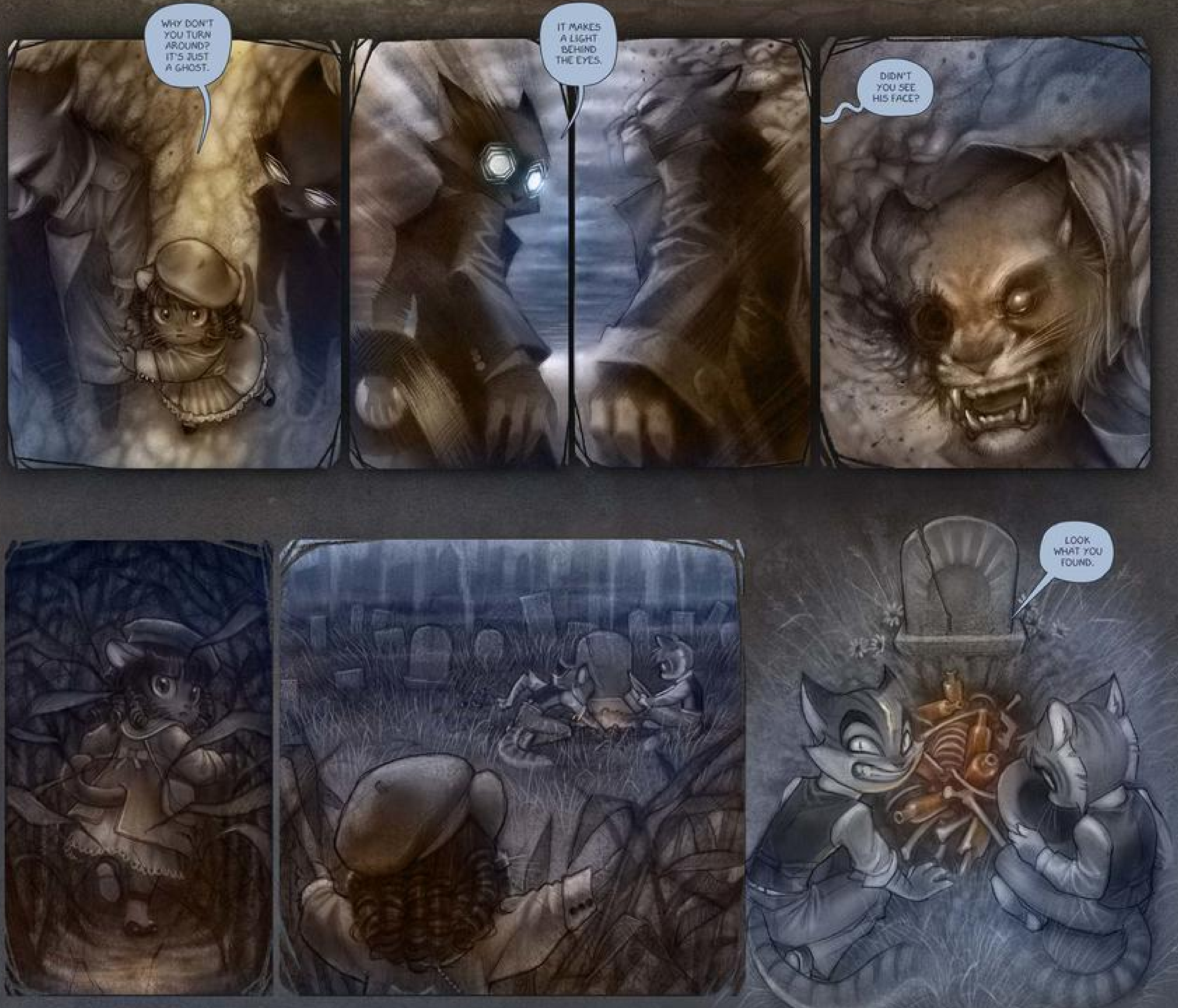

OHH. THAT'S HOW YOU ENDED UP TRAVELING OUT WEST? ALL THAT ADVENTURING ABOUT MUST HAVE SUITED YOU, THOUGH!
WORKING ON A BOAT AND AT A FARM AND A CIRCUS AND--
SHOOT! STALL! WHAT DID I DO WRONG NOW?
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. I SLIP THE CLUTCH ALL THE TIME AND WORE IT OUT.
RRRRRR TAK TAK TAK TAK
STOP
WHY?
BECAUSE I'M A HORRIBLE PERSON.
OH...
TRY GIVIN' IT MORE GAS WHEN YOU LET THE CLUTCH OUT.
AAAGH!
WHAT ARE YOU KIDS DOIN' OUT HERE IN THE STICKS THIS TIME OF NIGHT, ANYWAY?
WE'RE... LOST?
OH, YEAH? YOU HEADIN' TOWARD SAINT LOUIE?
Y-YEAH.

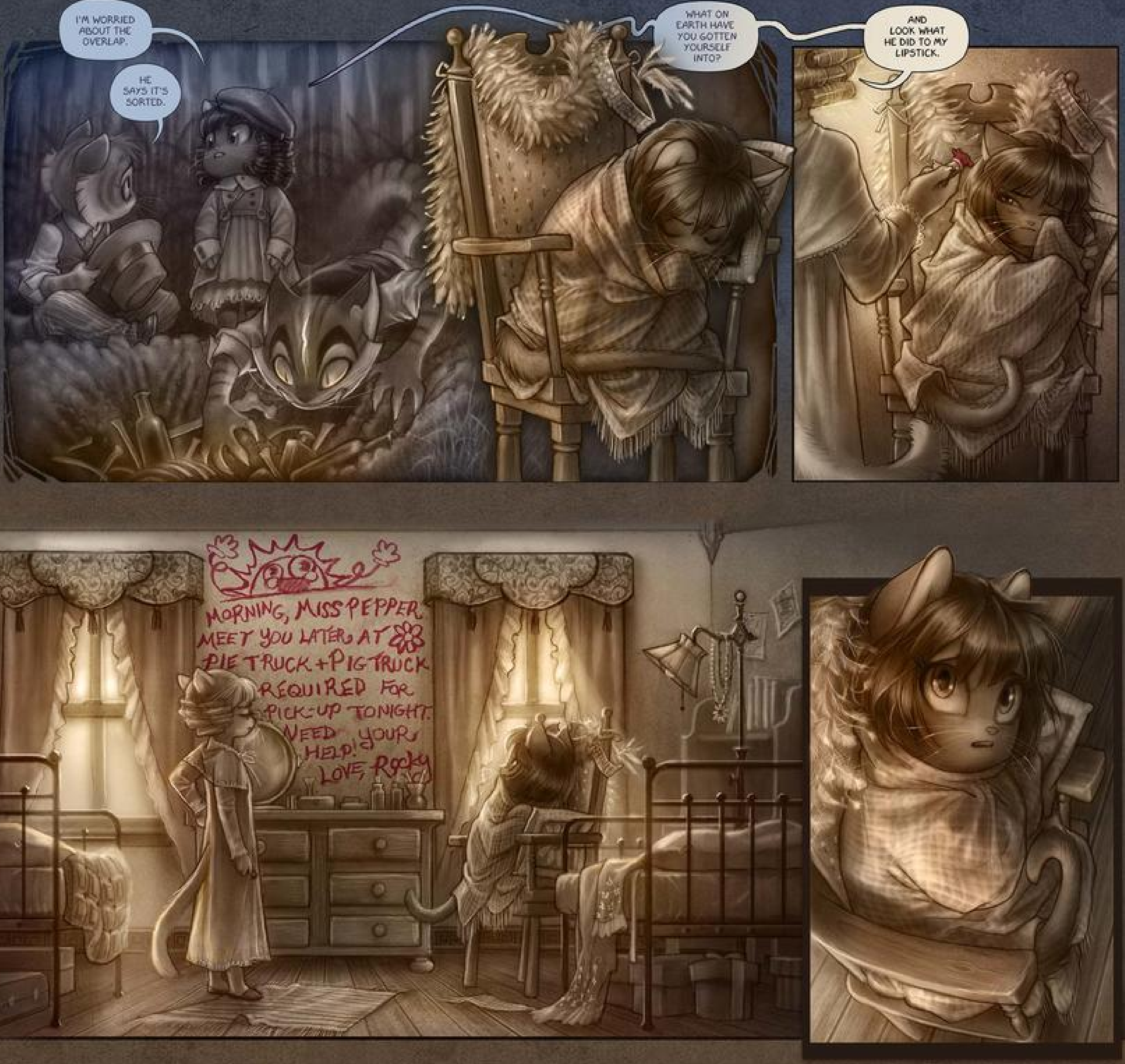

WELL, THE FERRIES DON'T RUN THIS LATE, BUT YOU'LL BE CITY-SIDE SOON ENOUGH IF YOU HANG A LEFT HERE. KEEP GOIN' EAST TILL YOU HIT THE OLD SAINT CHARLES BRIDGE.
CAREFUL OF THE FOG AND THE DEER.
AND STAY OUTTA TROUBLE.
TAP TAP
WHAT A WEIRD NIGHT.
WELL, ROCKY, IT'S FAR PAST CURFEW AND WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO HAVE BOYS IN THE DORM...
...BUT THAT'S ALL THE MORE INCENTIVE TO SNEAK YOU IN. WHADDAYA SAY?
I'LL EXPLAIN IT ALL AGAIN ON THE WAY THERE.
...WERE WE IN A CORN THING?

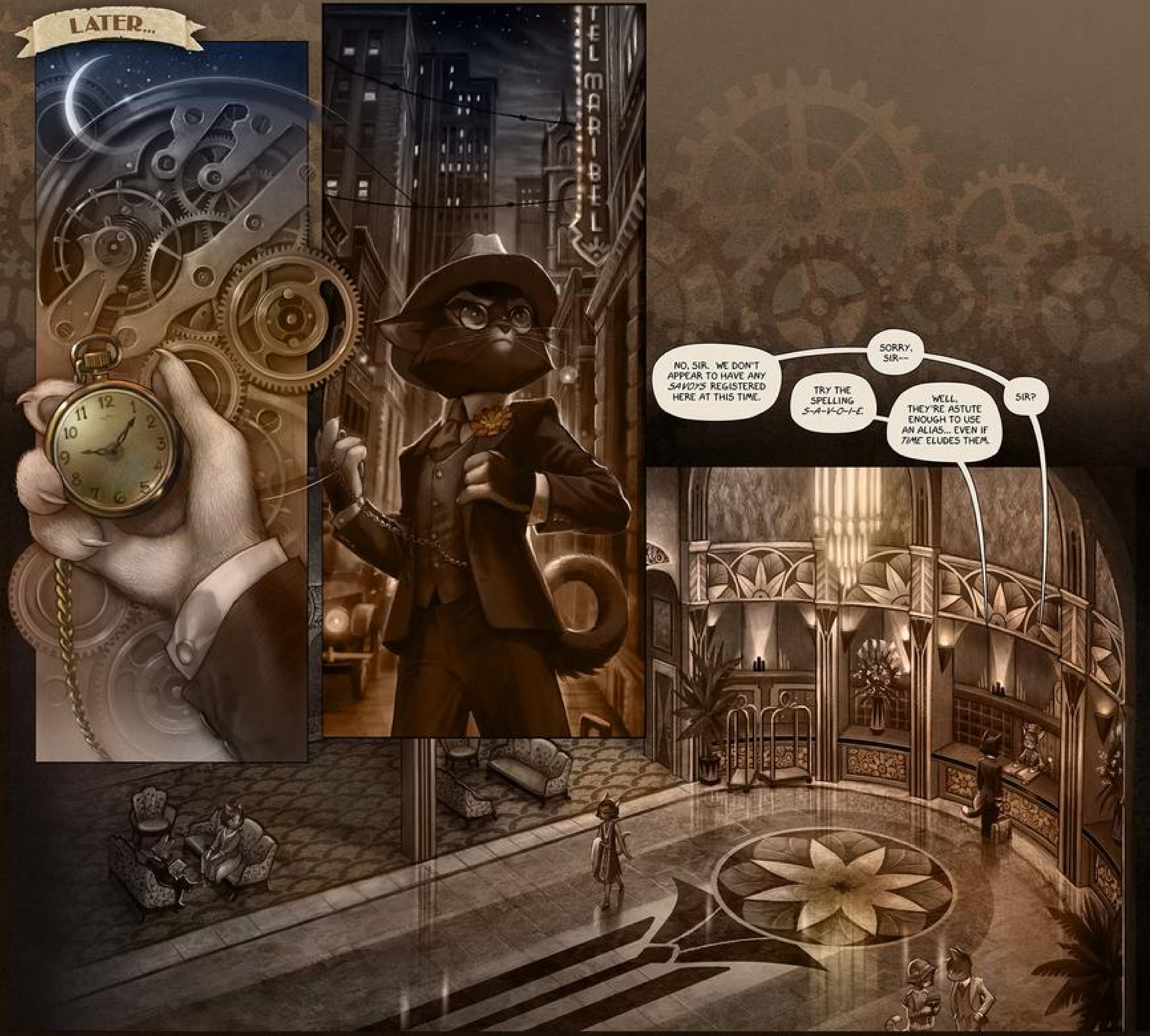

OLIVIA. HELEN.
IIIVY.
TELEPHONE
SPRING
HURRY UP. THE GAWKERS ARE CONVERGING.
ONE MINUTE. I JUST NEED TO REASSURE MISS M. THAT EVERYTHING'S... SOMETHING.
RING
RING
HELLO?
...ZIB?
H-HELLO? MISS M? I'M CALLING TO— HOW ARE YOU? YOU SOUND LOW.
OH, ROCKY. FINE, SWEETHEART. ARE YOU OKAY? YOU SOUND STRANGE...*ER* THAN USUAL.

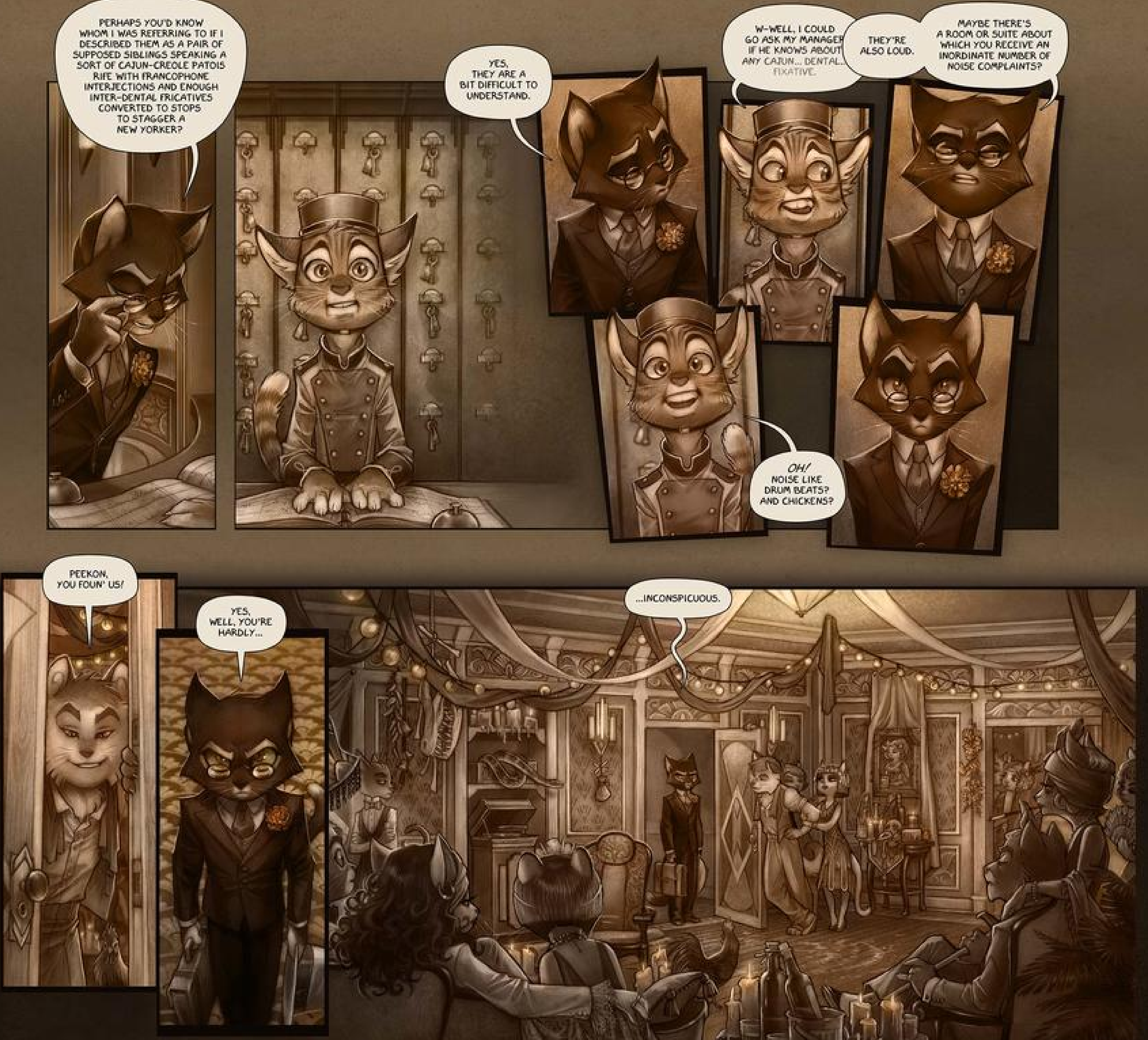

I'M WEARING A FLOWERY NIGHT GARMENT.
WELL... I'M SURE THAT EXPLAINS IT. HOW ARE OUR PLANS PLAYING OUT?
WONDERFULLY. DOUBLY GOOD. I SEE TWO OF EVERYTHING NOW.
THAT SOUNDS LOVELY. IS THAT WHAT YOU CALLED TO TELL ME?
NO, I — HOW ARE YOU?
WE COVERED THAT PART, SWEETIE. WHAT DID VIKTOR HAVE TO SAY?
I DON'T REMEMBER, BUT I'M TOLD I FOUND YOU SOME BOOZE.
I CAN GET IT TOMORROW... IF WE CAN SCRAPE UP THE FUNDS.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING. WE COULD TAKE BETS ON – ON HOW MUCH GLASS I'LL SWALLOW OR... HOW MANY NAILS I CAN HAMMER INTO MY SINUSES OR, WELL, I JUST NEED TO SLEEP AND THINK. I'D SELL MY SOUL IF IT COMES T
WELL, AS IT HAPPENS...
...MY MEETING WITH WICK TODAY WAS... FRUITFUL.
SEEMS HE'S SAVED US AGAIN, WHETHER HE KNOWS IT OR NOT.
WAAAOOOOWOKAY
YOU'RE CERTAIN EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT?
I'M GREAT. HOW ARE YOU?
CLICK
OKAY. ENOUGH REASSURING.
LET'S RESUME THE SNEAKING.

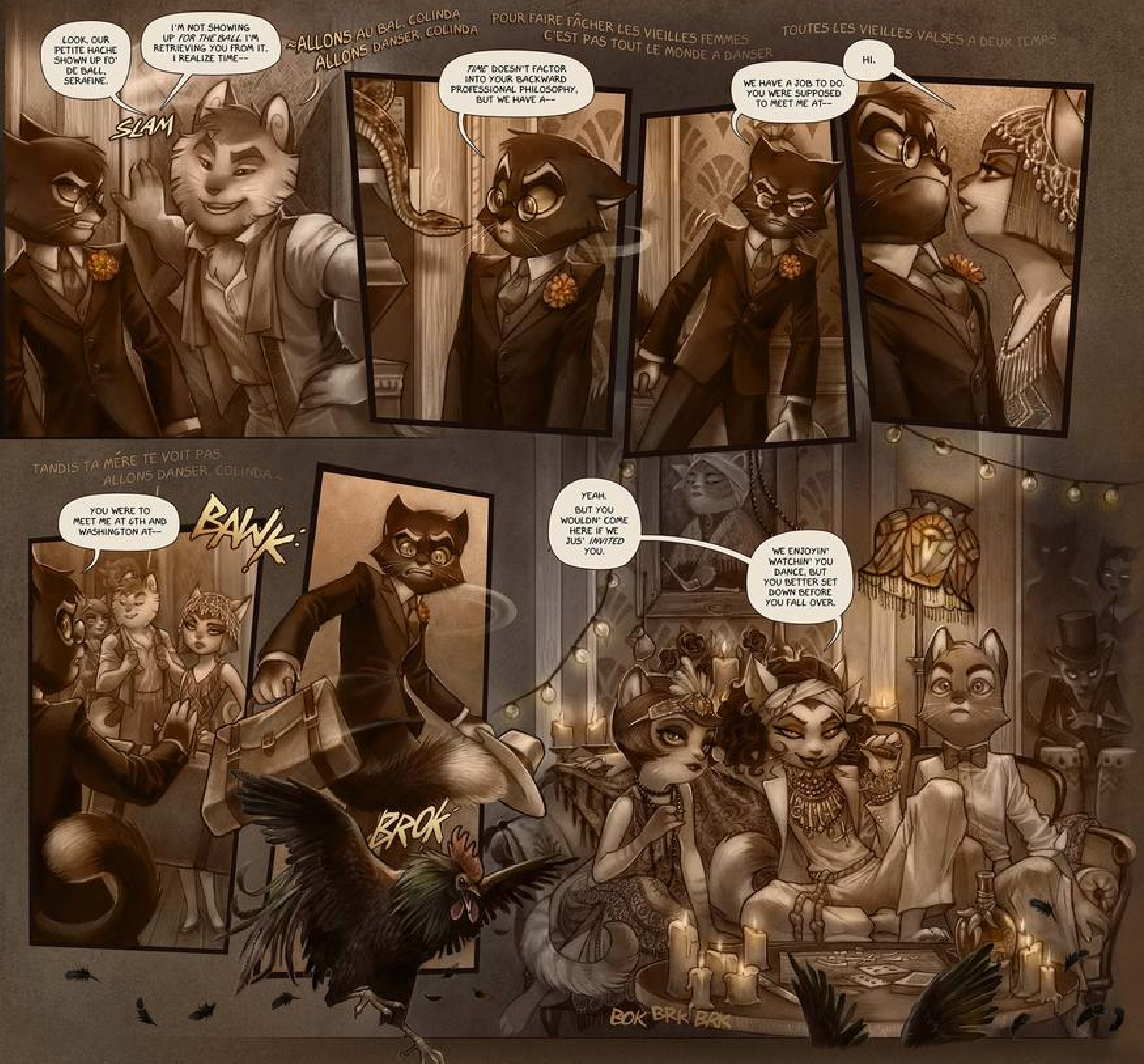

IS THAT ONE OF YOUR GANGSTER FRIENDS!?
ARE ALL OF YOUR GANGSTERS THAT WEEPY?
OOOOHUUUKHUHU
SHHH! SHOO, SHOO!
TRULY SCANDALOUS, PEPPER. ...I'M JEALOUS.
YOU GO AHEAD AND COLLAPSE ON THE BED. I'LL SLEEP IN THE CHAIR.
IF YOU'RE FEELING BETTER IN THE MORNING, I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE GIRLS OUT ON THE GREEN.
COME ON, BEFORE YOU WAKE UP THE ENTIRE FLOOR *AND* THE CHAPERONES.
THEY'LL THINK YOU'RE THE ABSOLUTE... BERRIES.
NEVERMIND.

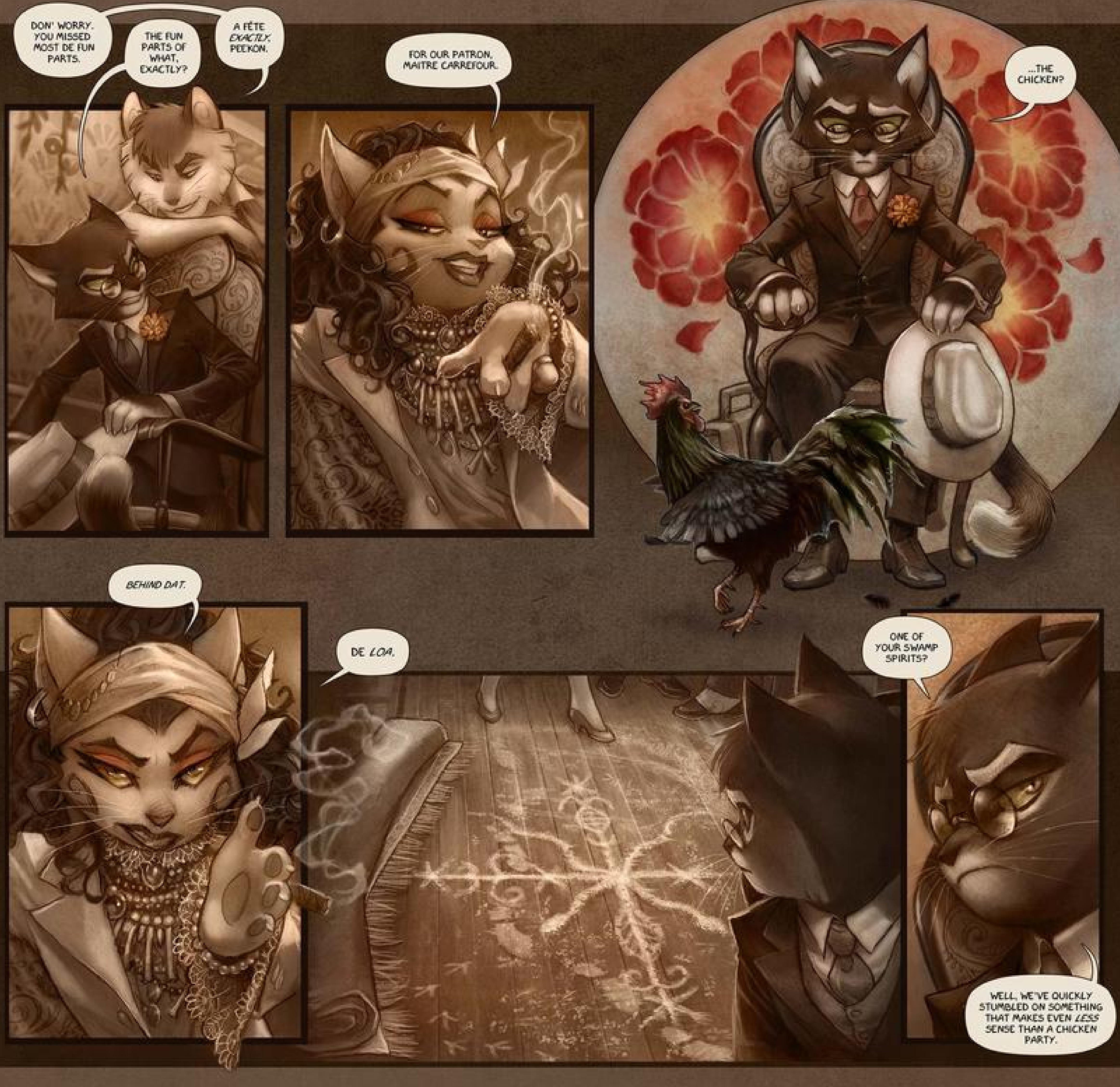

WHY DON'T YOU TURN AROUND? IT'S JUST A GHOST.
IT MAKES A LIGHT BEHIND THE EYES.
DIDN'T YOU SEE HIS FACE?
LOOK WHAT YOU FOUND.

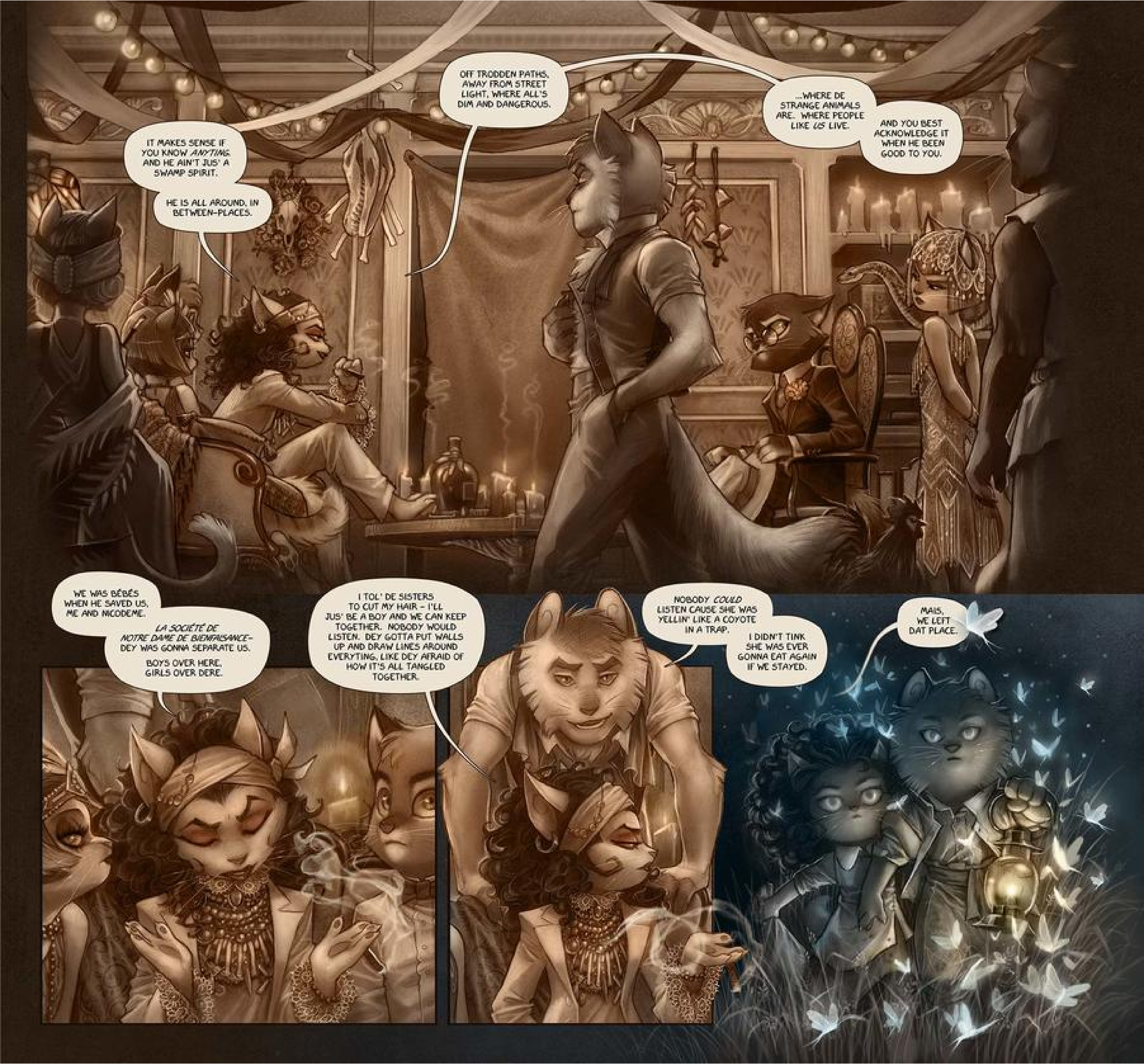

I'M WORRIED ABOUT THE OVERLAP.
HE SAYS IT'S SORTED.
WHAT ON EARTH HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO?
AND LOOK WHAT HE DID TO MY LIPSTICK.
MORNING, MISS PEPPER. MEET YOU LATER AT ✿ PIE TRUCK + PIG TRUCK REQUIRED FOR PICK-UP TONIGHT. NEED YOUR HELP! LOVE, Rocky

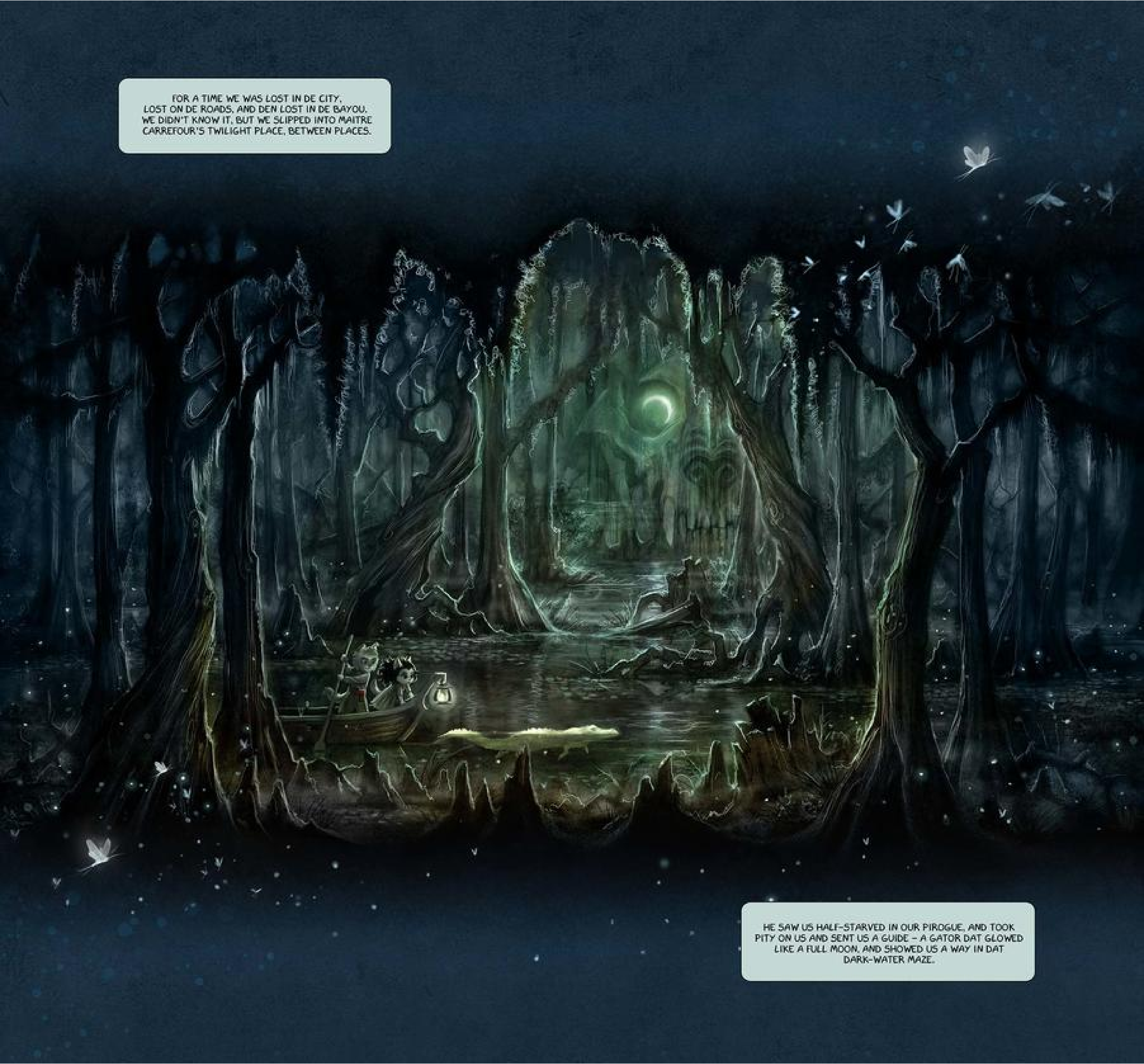

LATER...
TEL MARIBEL
NO, SIR. WE DON'T APPEAR TO HAVE ANY *SAVOYS* REGISTERED HERE AT THIS TIME.
TRY THE SPELLING *S-A-V-O-I-E.*
SORRY, SIR--
WELL, THEY'RE ASTUTE ENOUGH TO USE AN ALIAS... EVEN IF *TIME* ELUDES THEM.
SIR?

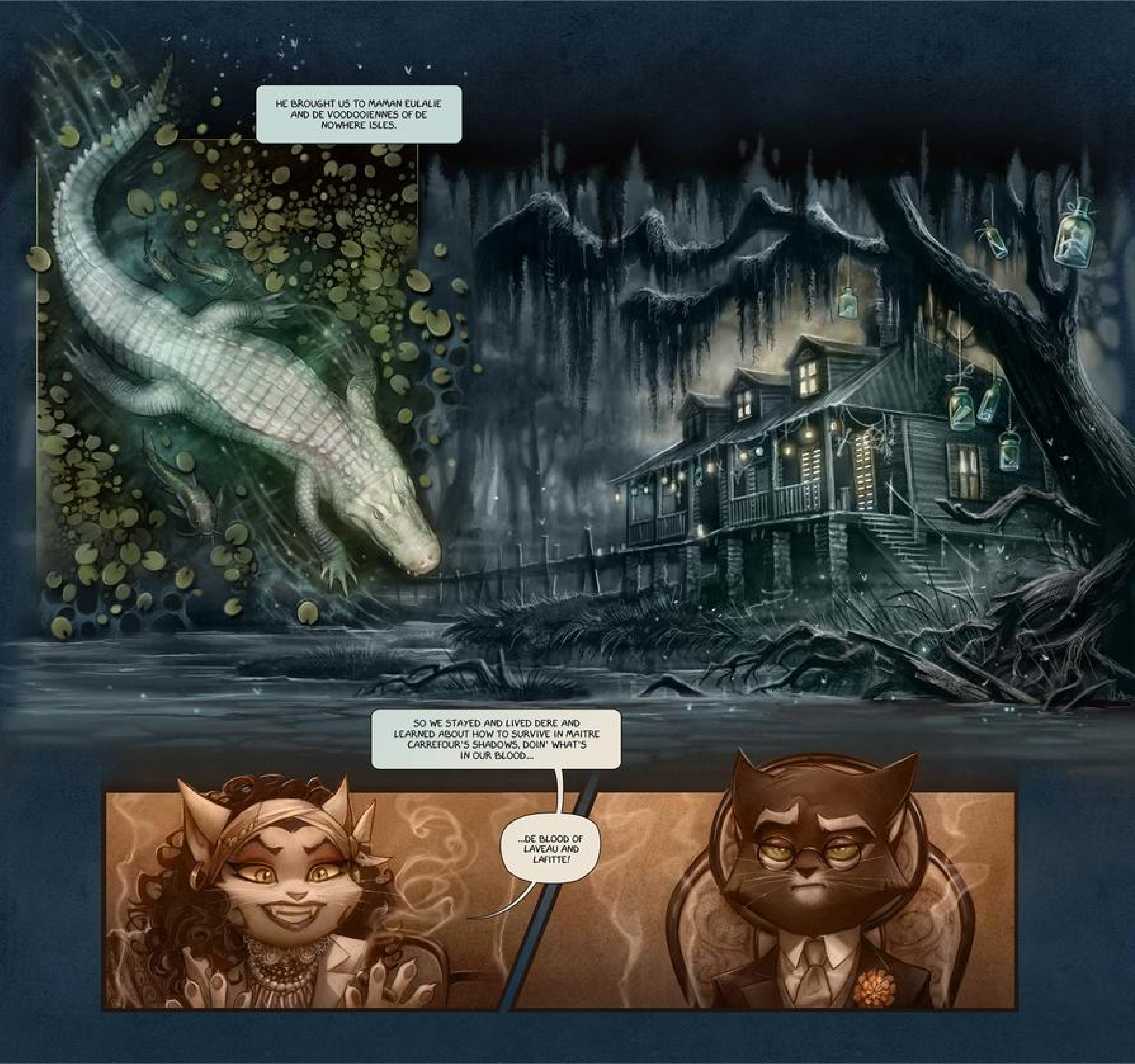

PERHAPS YOU'D KNOW WHOM I WAS REFERRING TO IF I DESCRIBED THEM AS A PAIR OF SUPPOSED SIBLINGS SPEAKING A SORT OF CAJUN-CREOLE PATOIS RIFE WITH FRANCOPHONE INTERJECTIONS AND ENOUGH INTER-DENTAL FRICATIVES CONVERTED TO STOPS TO STAGGER A NEW YORKER?
YES, THEY ARE A BIT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.
W-WELL, I COULD GO ASK MY MANAGER IF HE KNOWS ABOUT ANY CAJUN... DENTAL... FIXATIVE.
THEY'RE ALSO LOUD.
MAYBE THERE'S A ROOM OR SUITE ABOUT WHICH YOU RECEIVE AN INORDINATE NUMBER OF NOISE COMPLAINTS?
OH! NOISE LIKE DRUM BEATS? AND CHICKENS?
PEEKON, YOU FOUN' US!
YES, WELL, YOU'RE HARDLY...
...INCONSPICUOUS.

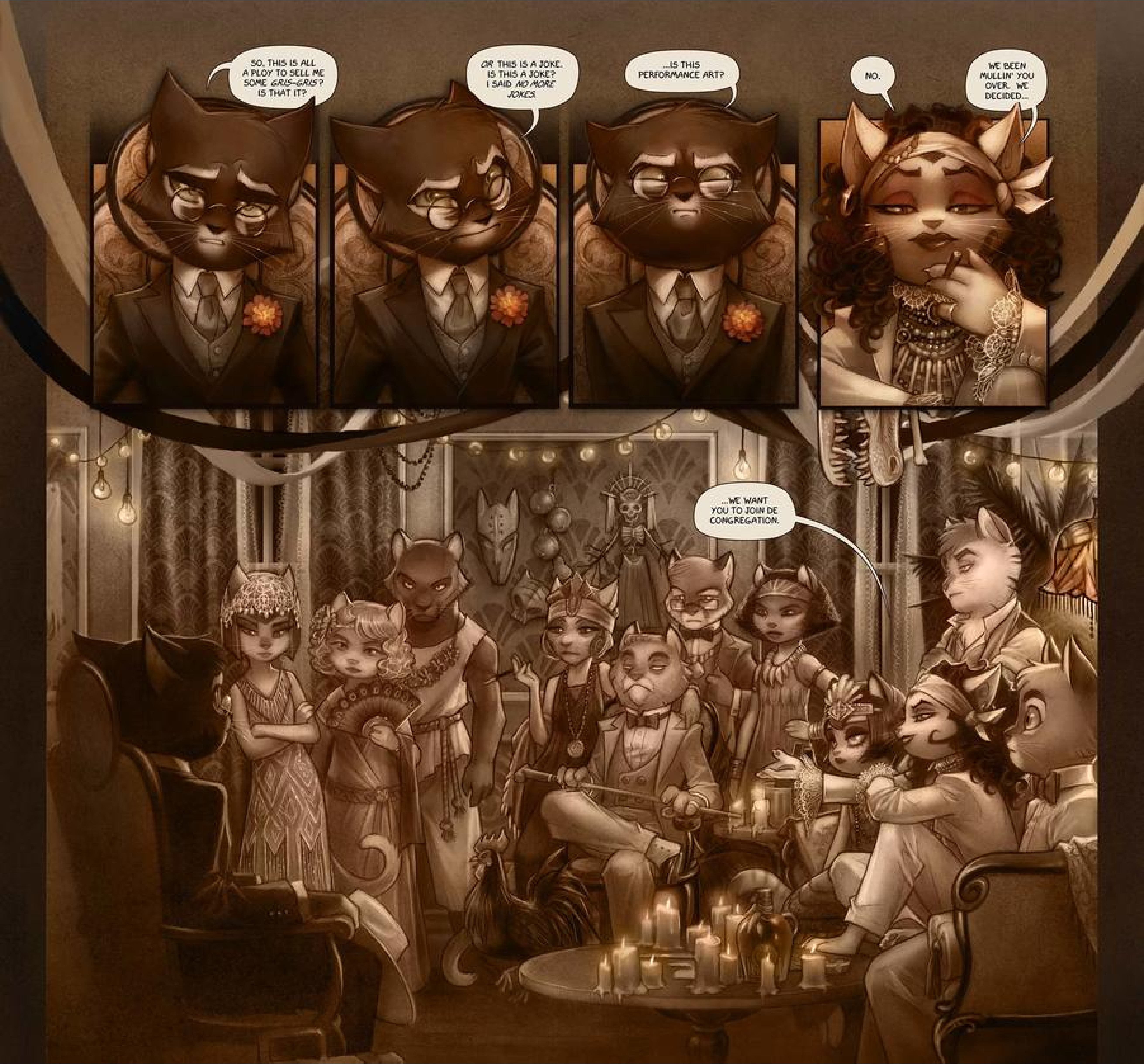

LOOK, OUR PETITE HACHE SHOWN UP FO' DE BALL, SERAFINE.
SLAM
I'M NOT SHOWING UP *FOR THE BALL*. I'M RETRIEVING YOU FROM IT. I REALIZE TIME--
~ALLONS AU BAL, COLINDA
ALLONS DANSER, COLINDA
POUR FAIRE FÂCHER LES VIEILLES FEMMES
C'EST PAS TOUT LE MONDE A DANSER
TIME DOESN'T FACTOR INTO YOUR BACKWARD PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHY, BUT WE HAVE A--
TOUTES LES VIEILLES VALSES A DEUX TEMPS
WE HAVE A JOB TO DO. YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET ME AT--
HI.
TANDIS TA MÉRE TE VOIT PAS
ALLONS DANSER, COLINDA ~
YOU WERE TO MEET ME AT 6TH AND WASHINGTON AT--
BAWK
BROK
YEAH. BUT YOU WOULDN' COME HERE IF WE JUS' *INVITED* YOU.
WE ENJOYIN' WATCHIN' YOU DANCE, BUT YOU BETTER SET DOWN BEFORE YOU FALL OVER.
BOK BRK BRK

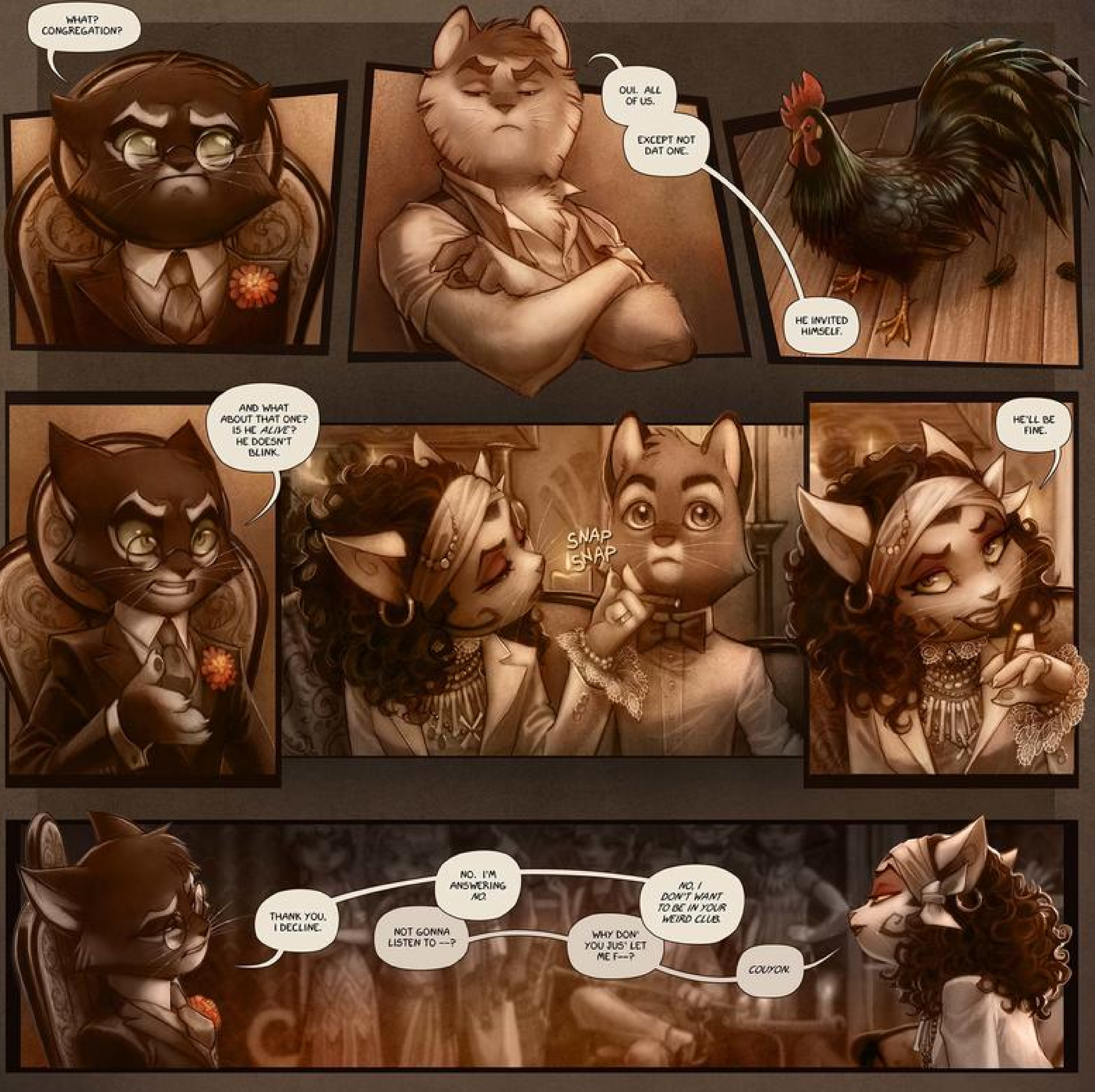

DON' WORRY. YOU MISSED MOST DE FUN PARTS.
THE FUN PARTS OF WHAT, EXACTLY?
A FÊTE *EXACTLY*, PEEKON.
FOR OUR PATRON, MAITRE CARREFOUR.
...THE CHICKEN?
BEHIND DAT.
DE *LOA.*
ONE OF YOUR SWAMP SPIRITS?
WELL, WE'VE QUICKLY STUMBLED ON SOMETHING THAT MAKES EVEN *LESS* SENSE THAN A CHICKEN PARTY.

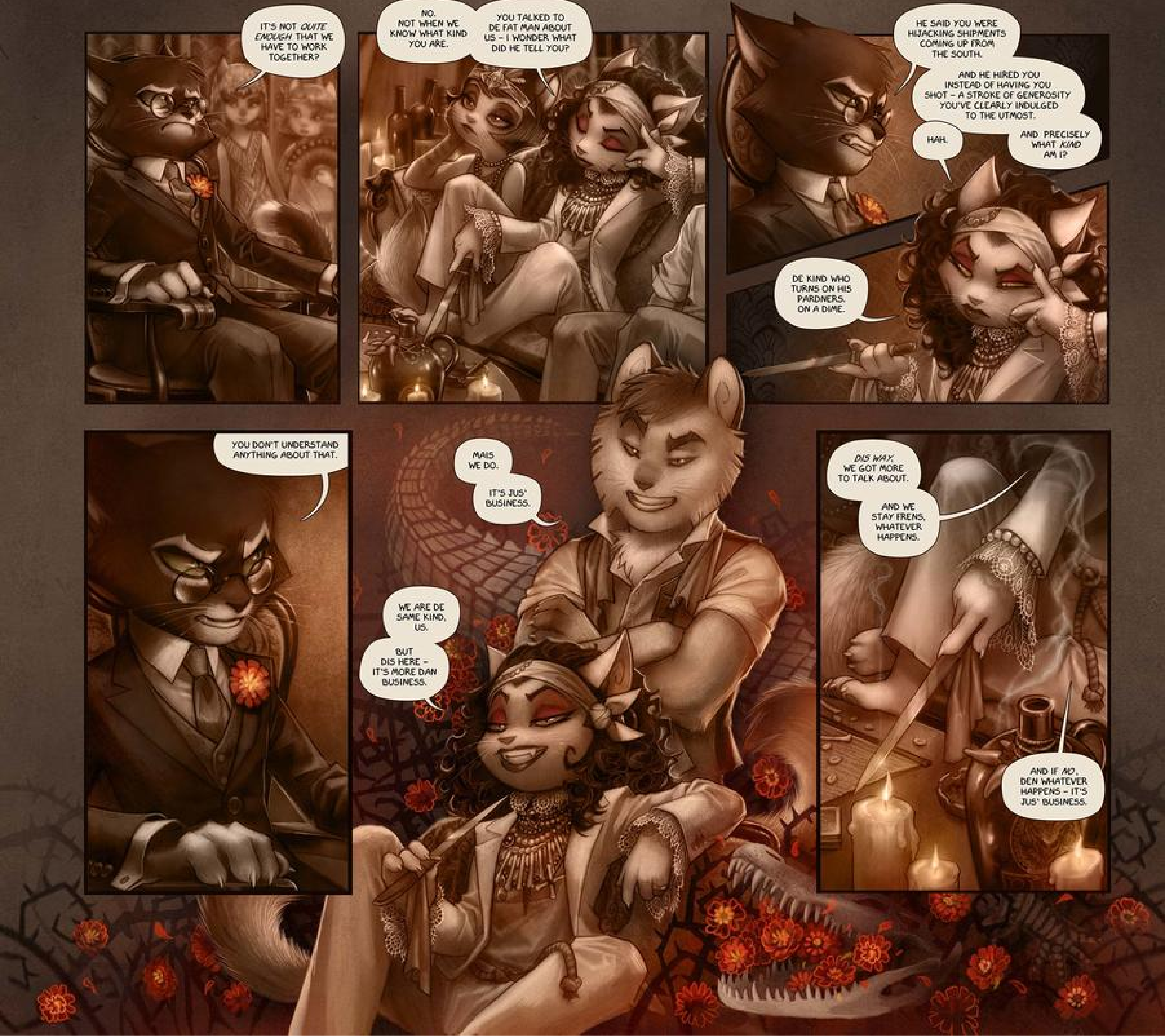

IT MAKES SENSE IF YOU KNOW *ANYTING*. AND HE AIN'T JUS' A SWAMP SPIRIT.
HE IS ALL AROUND, IN BETWEEN-PLACES.
OFF TRODDEN PATHS, AWAY FROM STREET LIGHT, WHERE ALL'S DIM AND DANGEROUS.
...WHERE DE STRANGE ANIMALS ARE. WHERE PEOPLE LIKE *US* LIVE.
AND YOU BEST ACKNOWLEDGE IT WHEN HE BEEN GOOD TO YOU.
WE WAS BÉBÉS WHEN HE SAVED US, ME AND NICODEME.
LA SOCIÉTÉ DE NOTRE DAME DE BIENFAISANCE– DEY WAS GONNA SEPARATE US.
BOYS OVER HERE, GIRLS OVER DERE.
I TOL' DE SISTERS TO CUT MY HAIR – I'LL JUS' BE A BOY AND WE CAN KEEP TOGETHER. NOBODY WOULD LISTEN. DEY GOTTA PUT WALLS UP AND DRAW LINES AROUND EVERYTING, LIKE DEY AFRAID OF HOW IT'S ALL TANGLED TOGETHER.
NOBODY *COULD* LISTEN CAUSE SHE WAS YELLIN' LIKE A COYOTE IN A TRAP.
I DIDN'T TINK SHE WAS EVER GONNA EAT AGAIN IF WE STAYED.
MAIS, WE LEFT DAT PLACE.

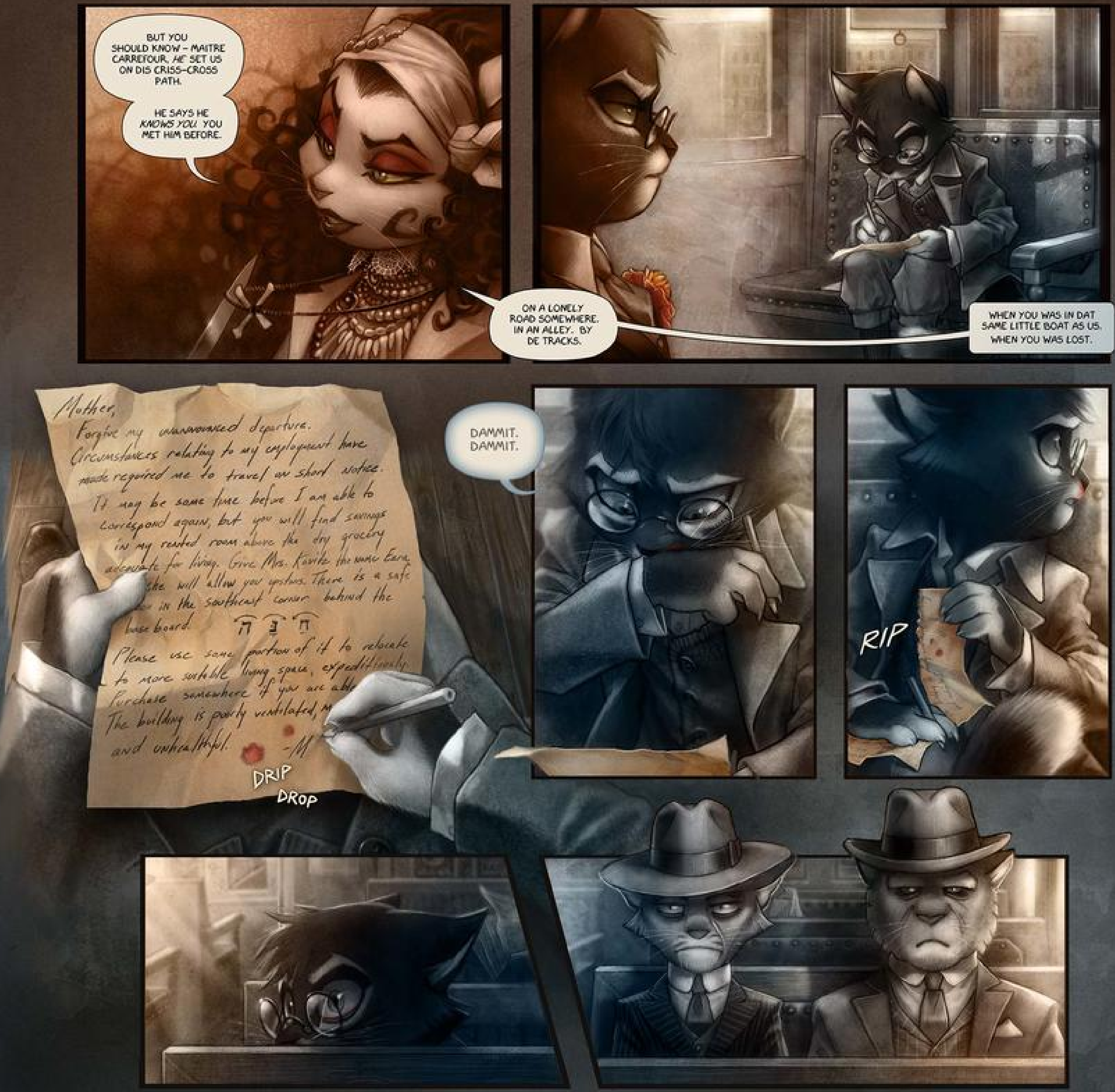

FOR A TIME WE WAS LOST IN DE CITY, LOST ON DE ROADS, AND DEN LOST IN DE BAYOU. WE DIDN'T KNOW IT, BUT WE SLIPPED INTO MAITRE CARREFOUR'S TWILIGHT PLACE, BETWEEN PLACES.
HE SAW US HALF-STARVED IN OUR PIROGUE, AND TOOK PITY ON US AND SENT US A GUIDE – A GATOR DAT GLOWED LIKE A FULL MOON, AND SHOWED US A WAY IN DAT DARK-WATER MAZE.


HE BROUGHT US TO MAMAN EULALIE AND DE VOODOOIENNES OF DE NOWHERE ISLES.
SO WE STAYED AND LIVED DERE AND LEARNED ABOUT HOW TO SURVIVE IN MAITRE CARREFOUR'S SHADOWS, DOIN' WHAT'S IN OUR BLOOD...
...DE BLOOD OF LAVEAU AND LAFITTE!


SO. THIS IS ALL A PLOY TO SELL ME SOME *GRIS-GRIS*? IS THAT IT?
OR THIS IS A JOKE. IS THIS A JOKE? I SAID *NO MORE JOKES.*
...IS THIS PERFORMANCE ART?
NO.
WE BEEN MULLIN' YOU OVER. WE DECIDED...
...WE WANT YOU TO JOIN DE CONGREGATION.


WHAT? CONGREGATION?
OUI. ALL OF US.
EXCEPT NOT DAT ONE.
HE INVITED HIMSELF.
AND WHAT ABOUT THAT ONE? IS HE *ALIVE*? HE DOESN'T BLINK.
SNAP SNAP
HE'LL BE FINE.
THANK YOU, I DECLINE.
NOT GONNA LISTEN TO --?
NO. I'M ANSWERING *NO*.
WHY DON' YOU JUS' LET ME F--?
NO, I DON'T WANT TO BE IN YOUR WEIRD CLUB.
COUYON.

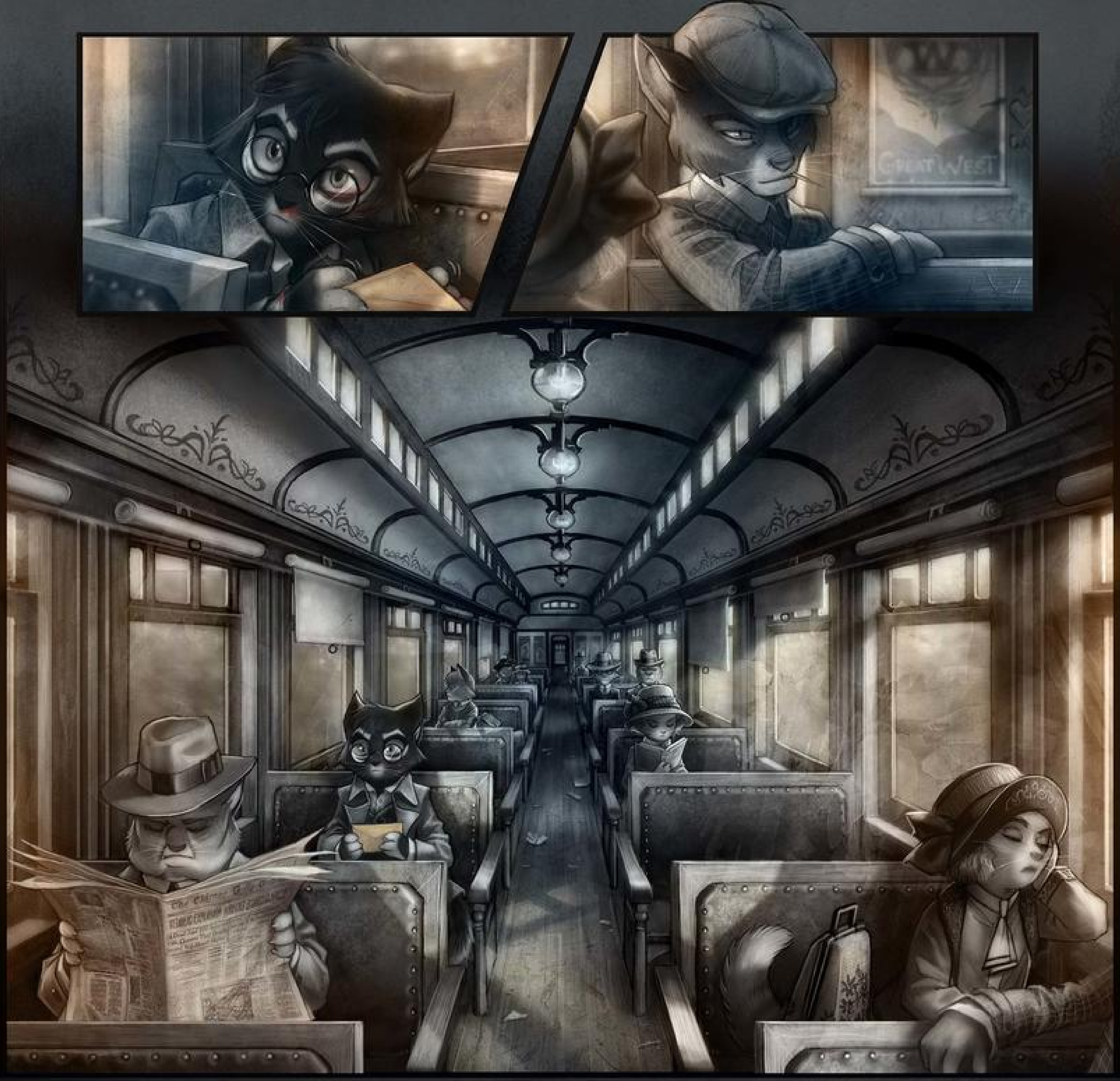

IT'S NOT *QUITE ENOUGH* THAT WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER?
NO. NOT WHEN WE KNOW WHAT KIND YOU ARE.
YOU TALKED TO DE FAT MAN ABOUT US – I WONDER WHAT DID HE TELL YOU?
HE SAID YOU WERE HIJACKING SHIPMENTS COMING UP FROM THE SOUTH.
AND HE HIRED YOU INSTEAD OF HAVING YOU SHOT – A STROKE OF GENEROSITY YOU'VE CLEARLY INDULGED TO THE UTMOST.
HAH.
AND PRECISELY WHAT *KIND* AM I?
DE KIND WHO TURNS ON HIS PARDNERS. ON A DIME.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.
MAIS WE DO.
IT'S JUS' BUSINESS.
WE ARE DE SAME KIND, US.
BUT DIS HERE – IT'S MORE DAN BUSINESS.
DIS WAY, WE GOT MORE TO TALK ABOUT.
AND WE STAY FRENS, WHATEVER HAPPENS.
AND IF *NO*, DEN WHATEVER HAPPENS – IT'S JUS' BUSINESS.

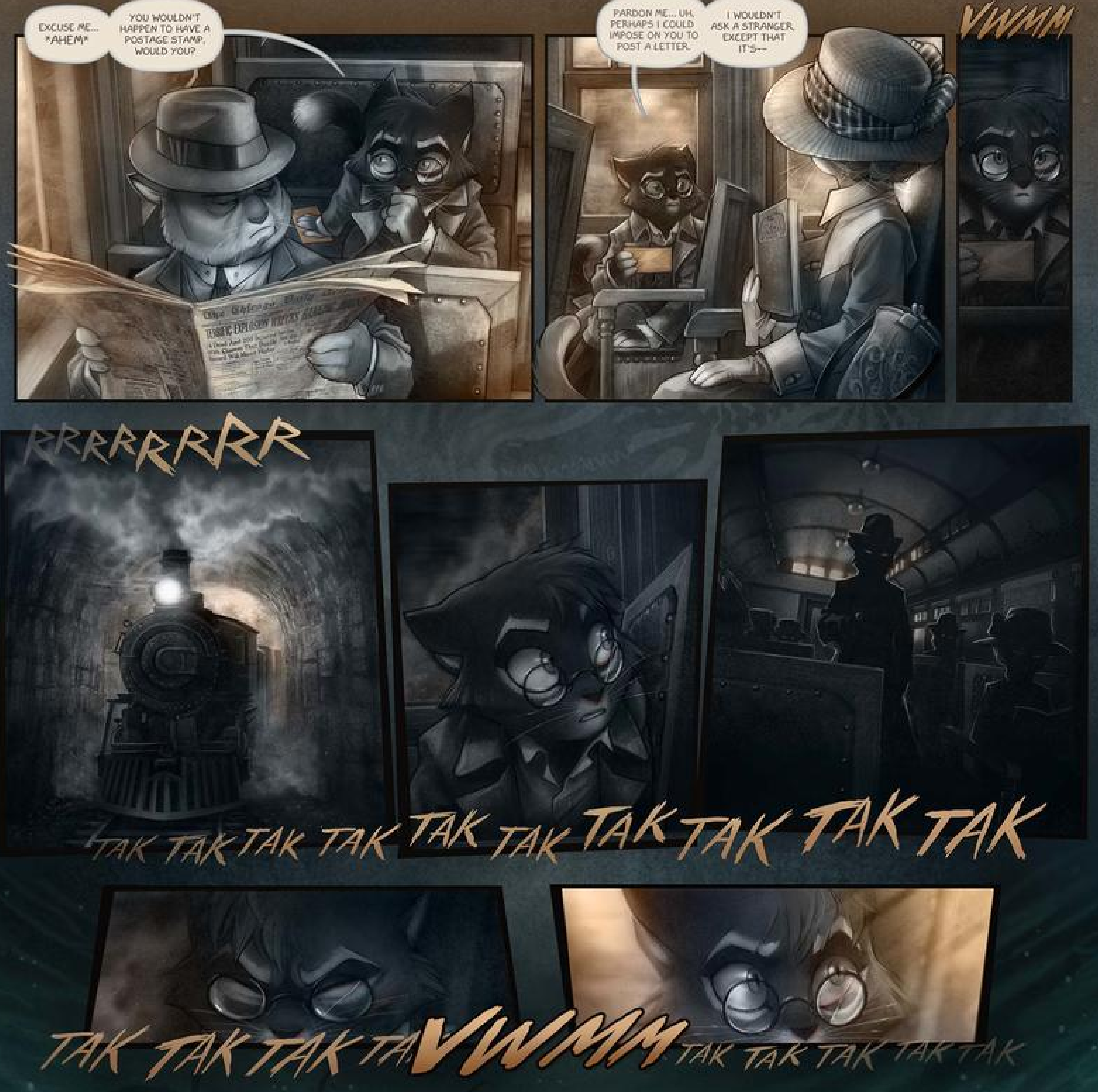

BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW – MAITRE CARREFOUR, *HE* SET US ON DIS CRISS-CROSS PATH.
HE SAYS HE *KNOWS YOU*. YOU MET HIM BEFORE.
ON A LONELY ROAD SOMEWHERE. IN AN ALLEY. BY DE TRACKS.
WHEN YOU WAS IN DAT SAME LITTLE BOAT AS US. WHEN YOU WAS LOST.
DAMMIT. DAMMIT.
RIP
DRIP
DROP

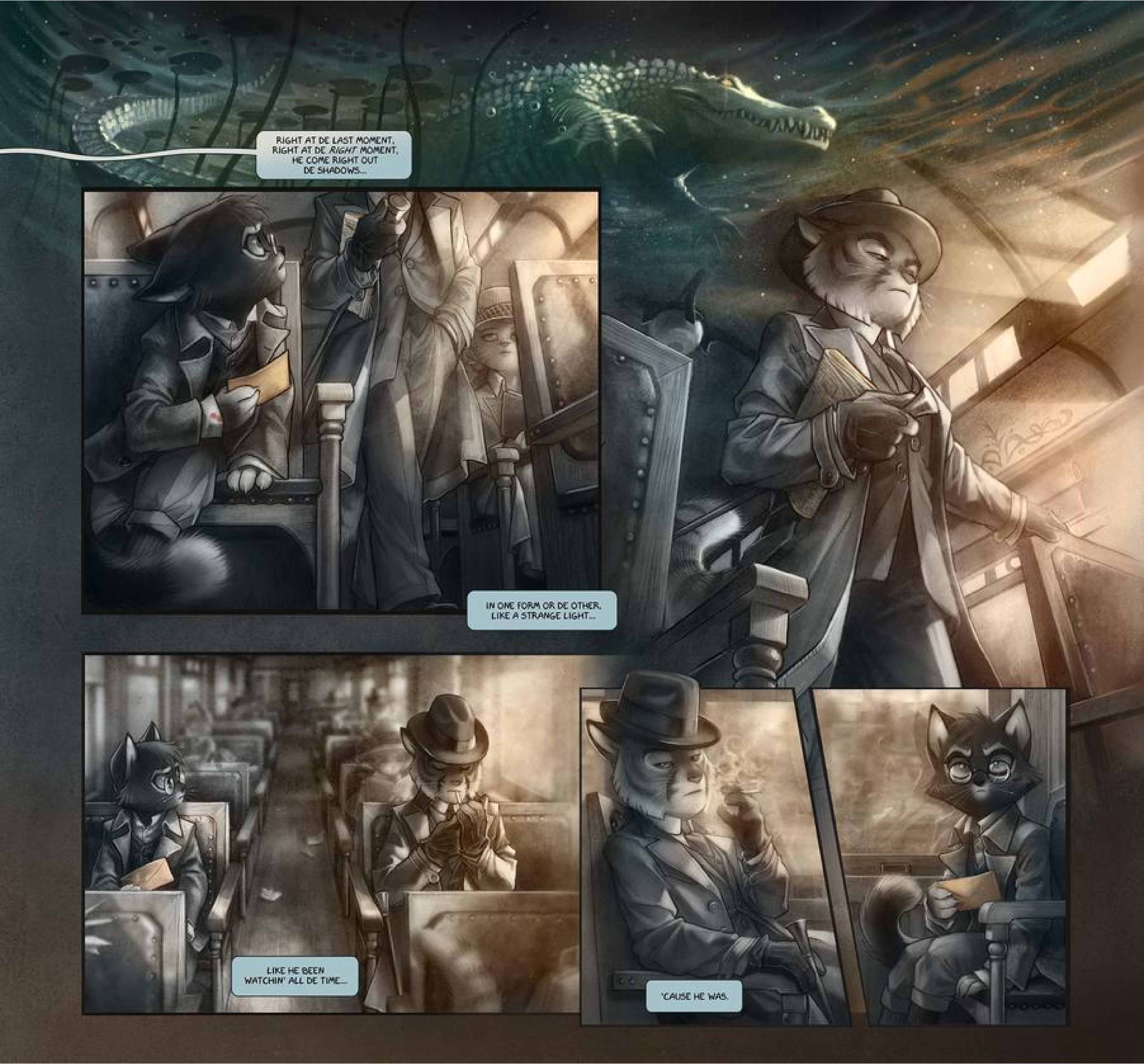
Mother,

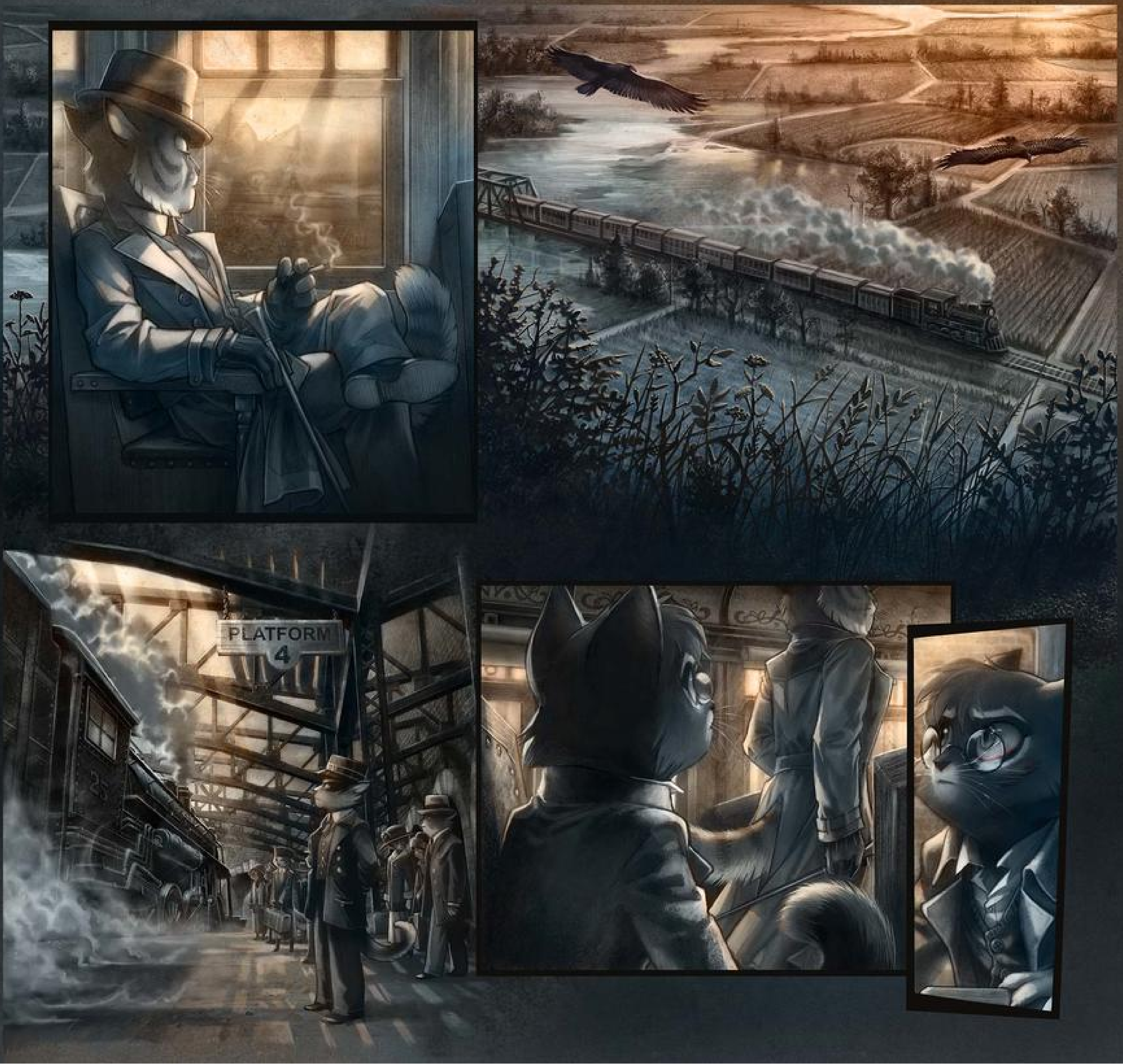
Forgive my unannounced departure.
Circumstances relating to my employment have made required me to travel on short notice.
It may be some time before I am able to correspond again, but you will find savings in my rented room above the dry grocery adequate for living. Give Mrs. Kavitz the name Ezra, [illegible] she will allow you upstairs. There is a safe [illegible] in the southeast corner behind the base board. חנה

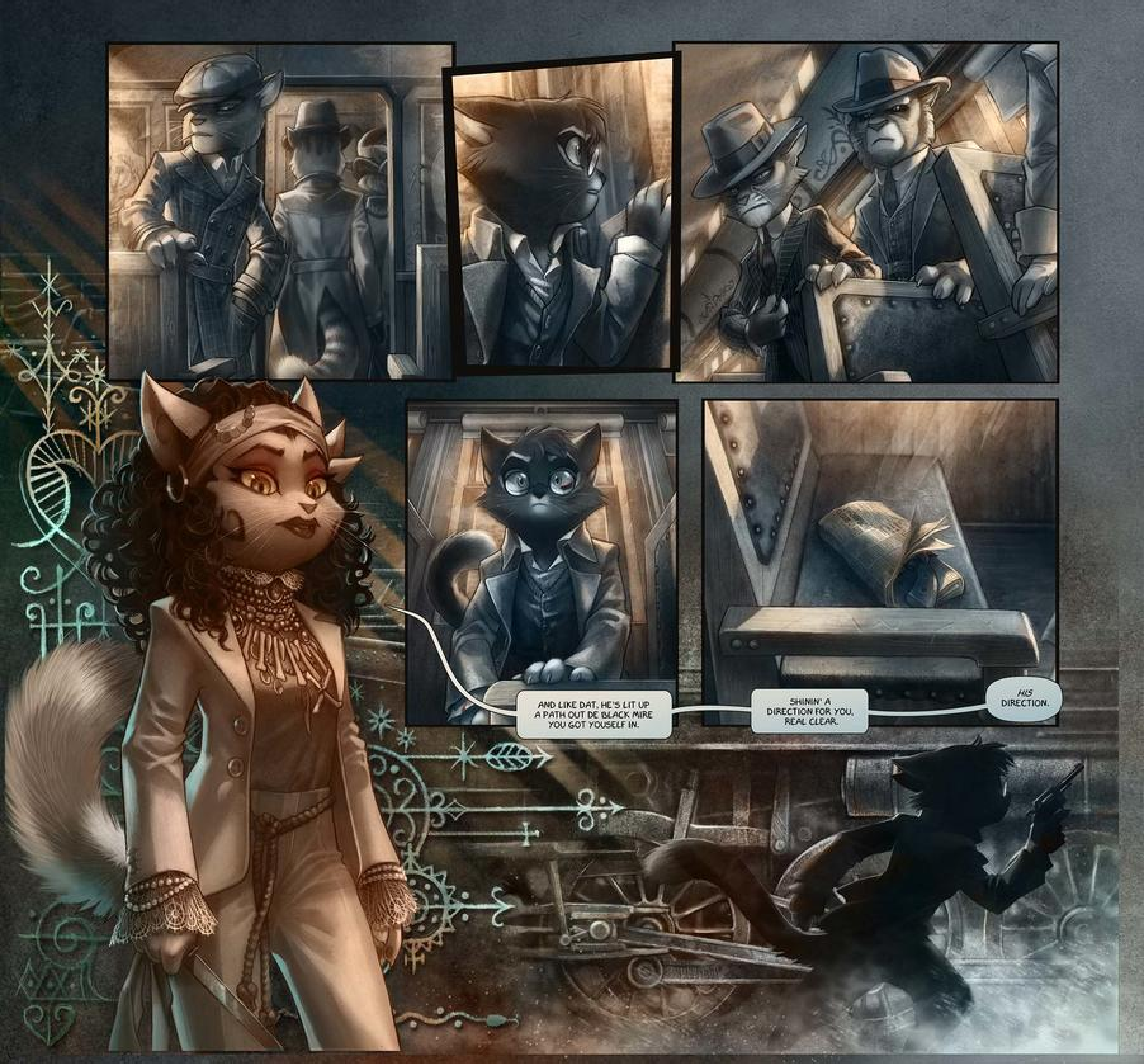
Please use some portion of it to relocate to more suitable living space, expeditiously. Purchase somewhere if you are abl
The building is poorly ventilated, m
and unhealthful. -M

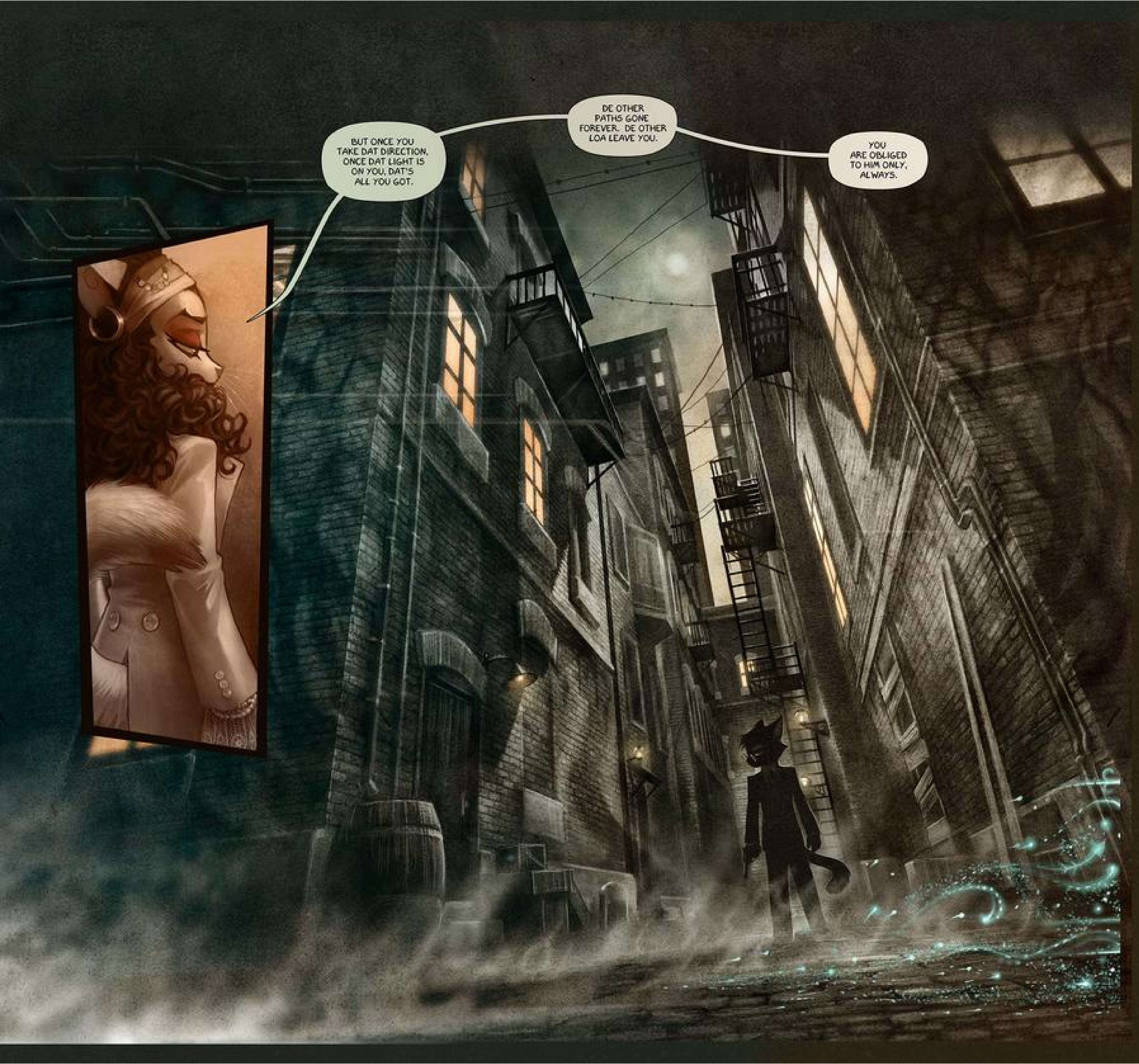

W
GREAT WEST

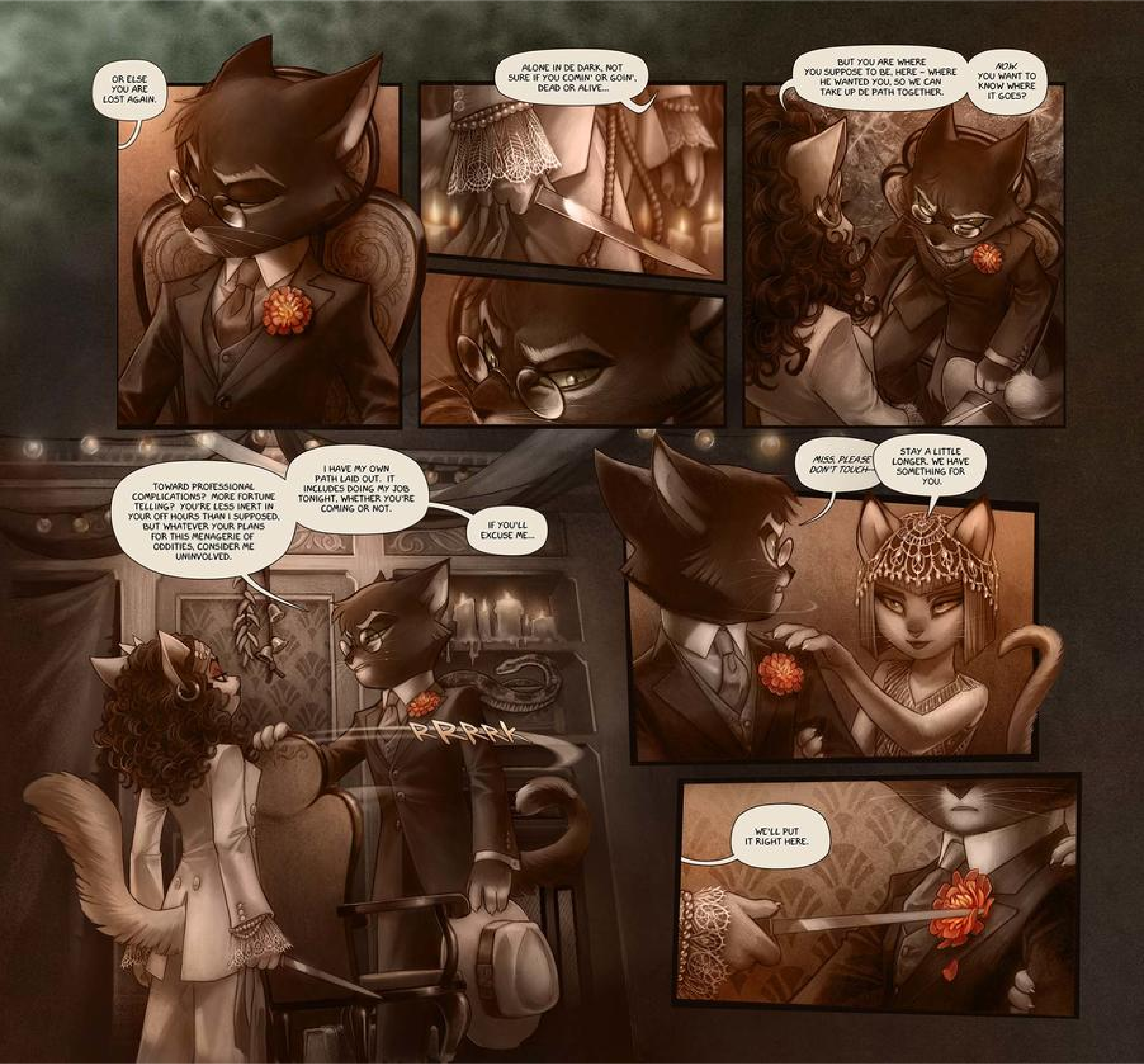

EXCUSE ME... *AHEM*
YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE A POSTAGE STAMP, WOULD YOU?
PARDON ME... UH, PERHAPS I COULD IMPOSE ON YOU TO POST A LETTER.
I WOULDN'T ASK A STRANGER, EXCEPT THAT IT'S—
VWMM
RRRRRRRR
TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK
TAK TAK TAK TA VWMMM TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK

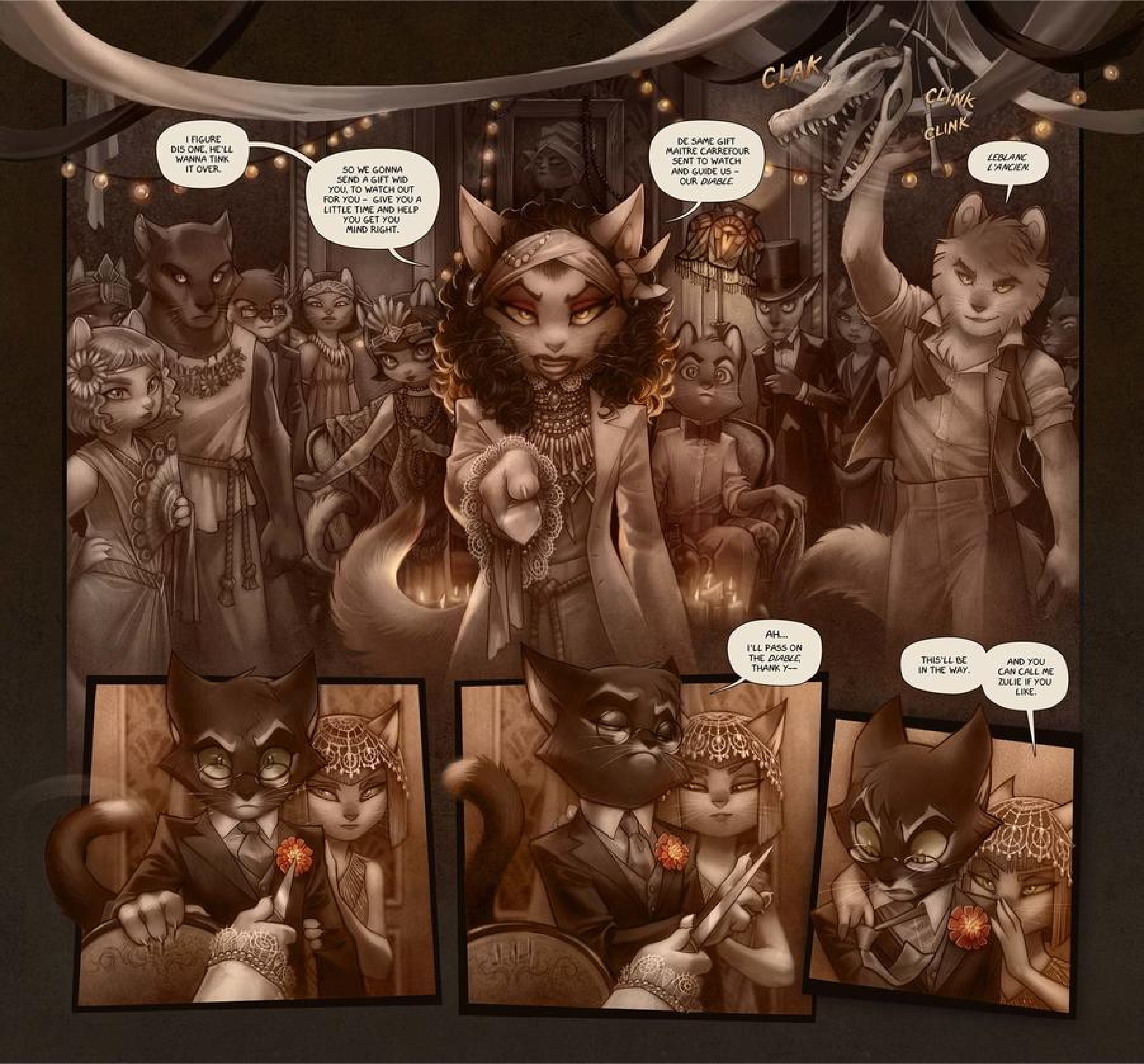

RIGHT AT DE LAST MOMENT, RIGHT AT DE *RIGHT* MOMENT, HE COME RIGHT OUT DE SHADOWS...
IN ONE FORM OR DE OTHER. LIKE A STRANGE LIGHT...
LIKE HE BEEN WATCHIN' ALL DE TIME...
'CAUSE HE WAS.

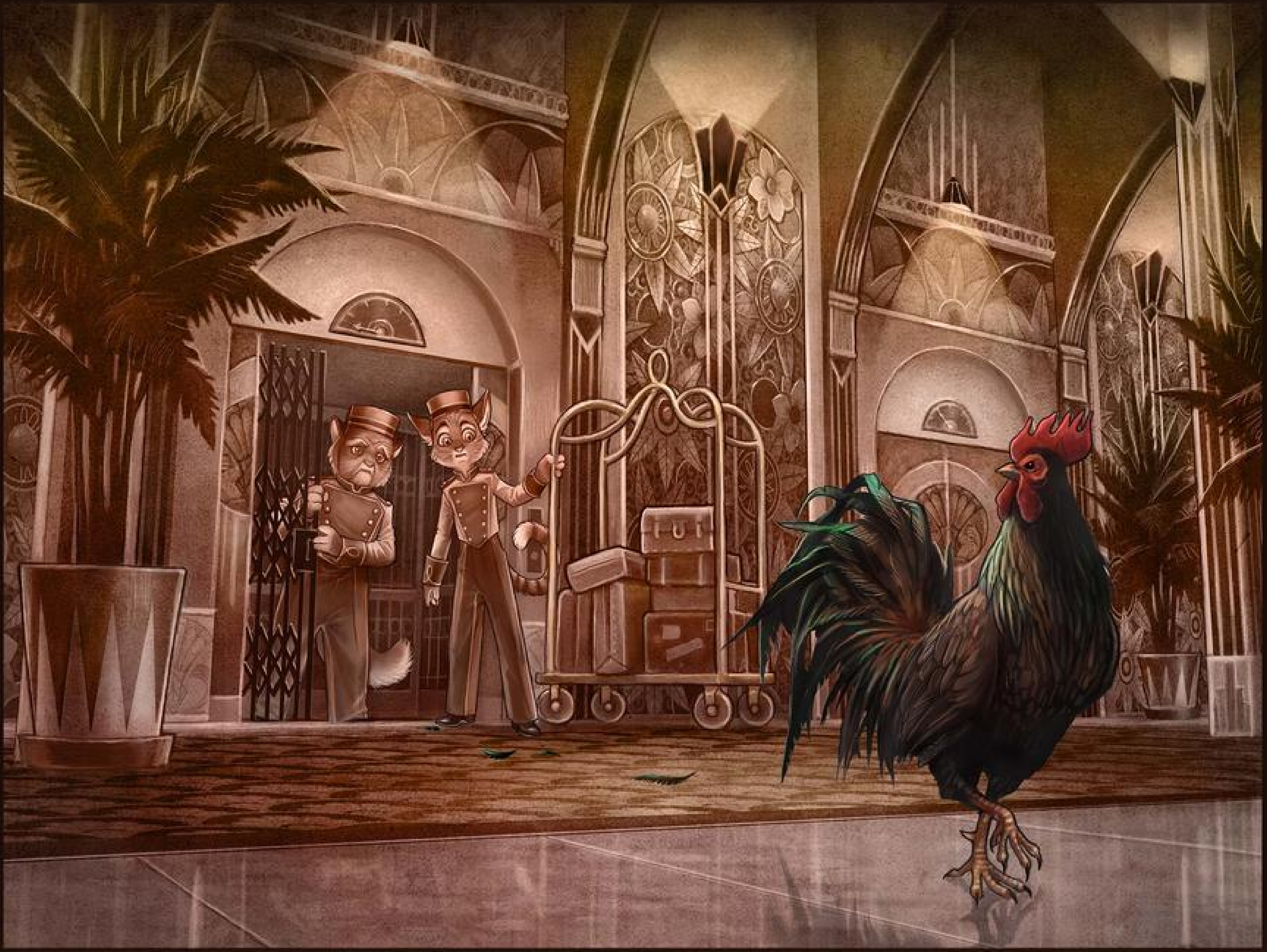

PLATFORM
4
25

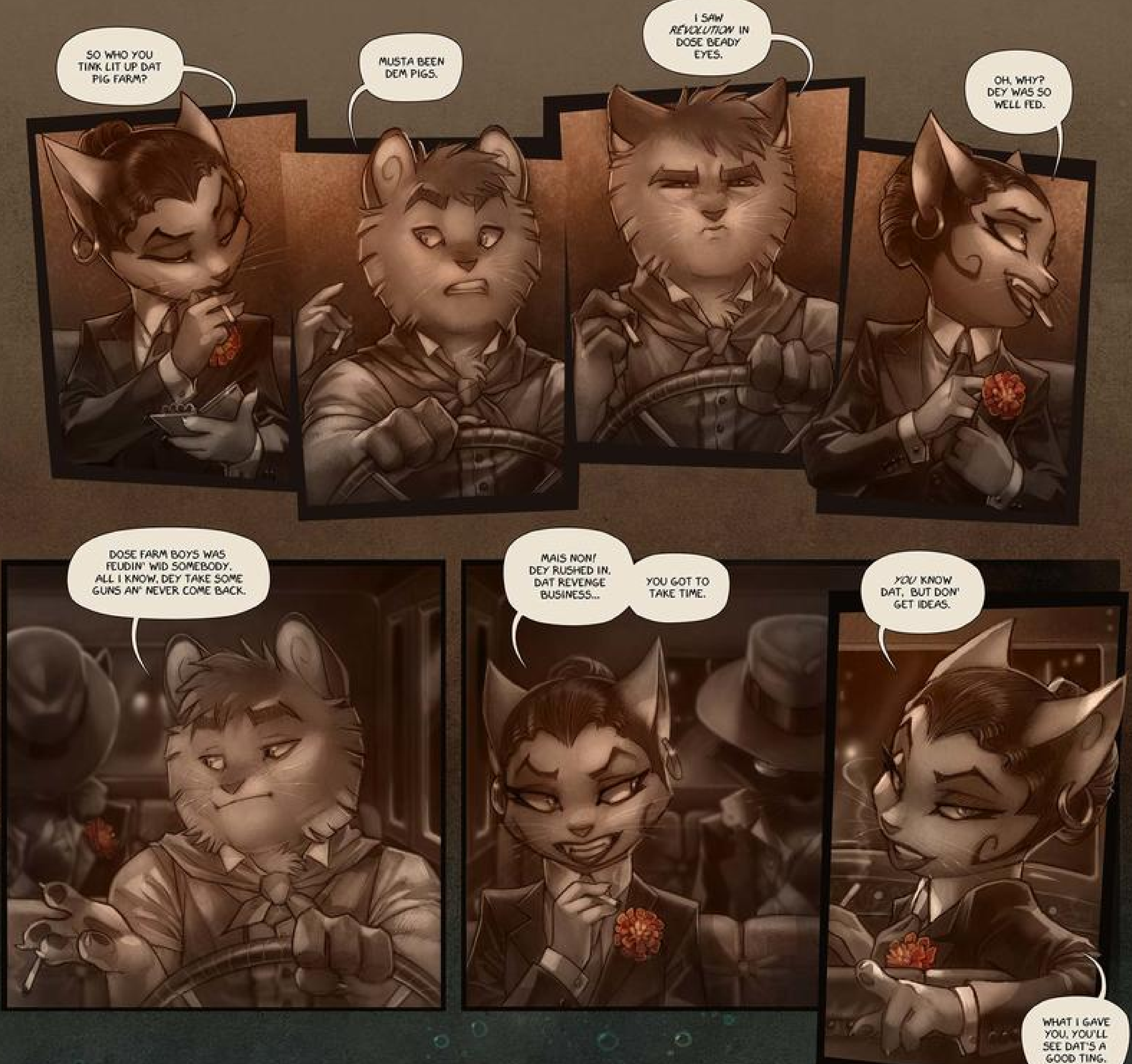

AND LIKE DAT, HE'S LIT UP A PATH OUT DE BLACK MIRE YOU GOT YOUSELF IN.
SHININ' A DIRECTION FOR YOU, REAL CLEAR.
HIS DIRECTION.

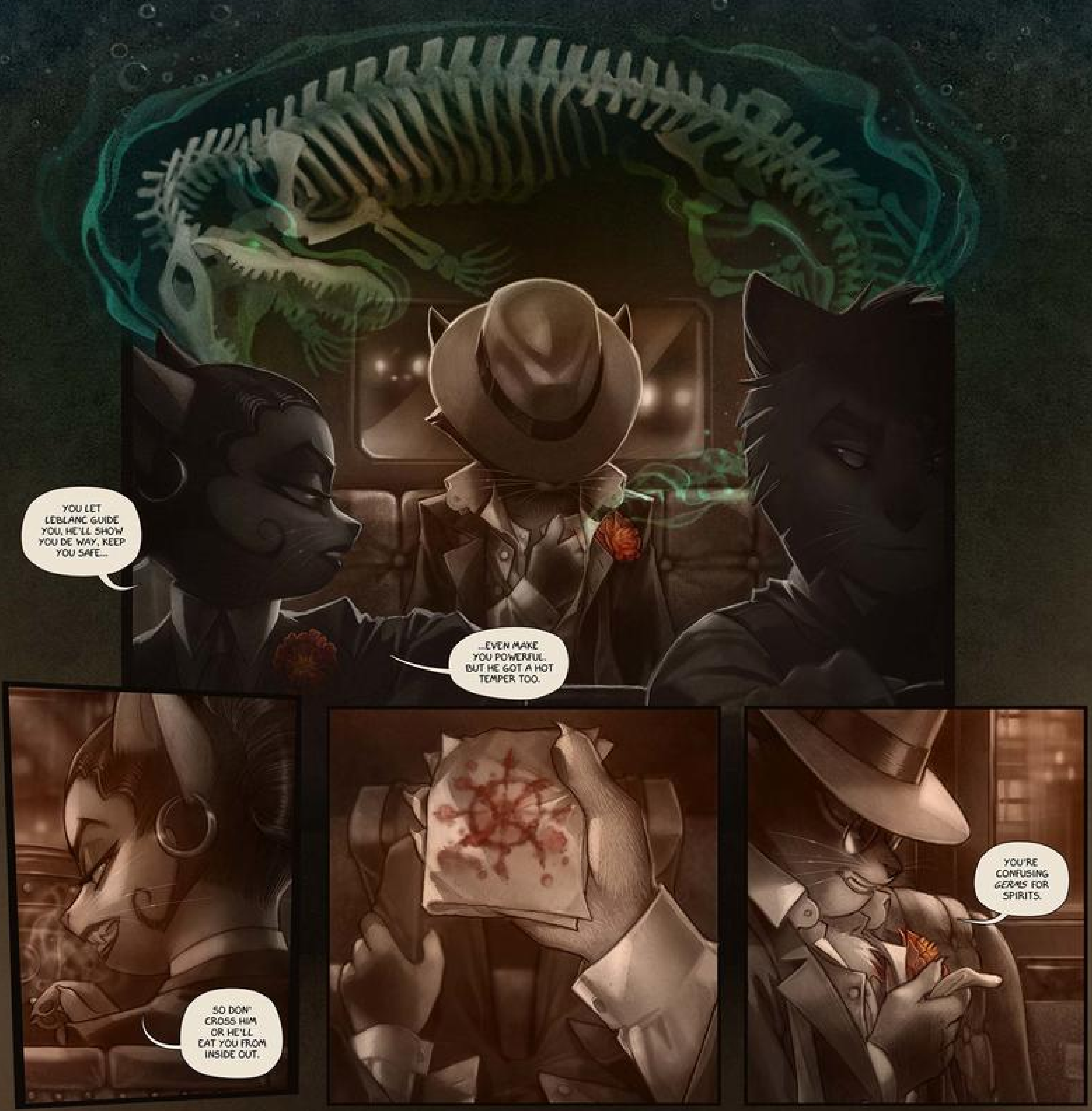

BUT ONCE YOU TAKE DAT DIRECTION, ONCE DAT LIGHT IS ON YOU, DAT'S ALL YOU GOT.
DE OTHER PATHS GONE FOREVER. DE OTHER LOA LEAVE YOU.
YOU ARE OBLIGED TO HIM ONLY, ALWAYS.

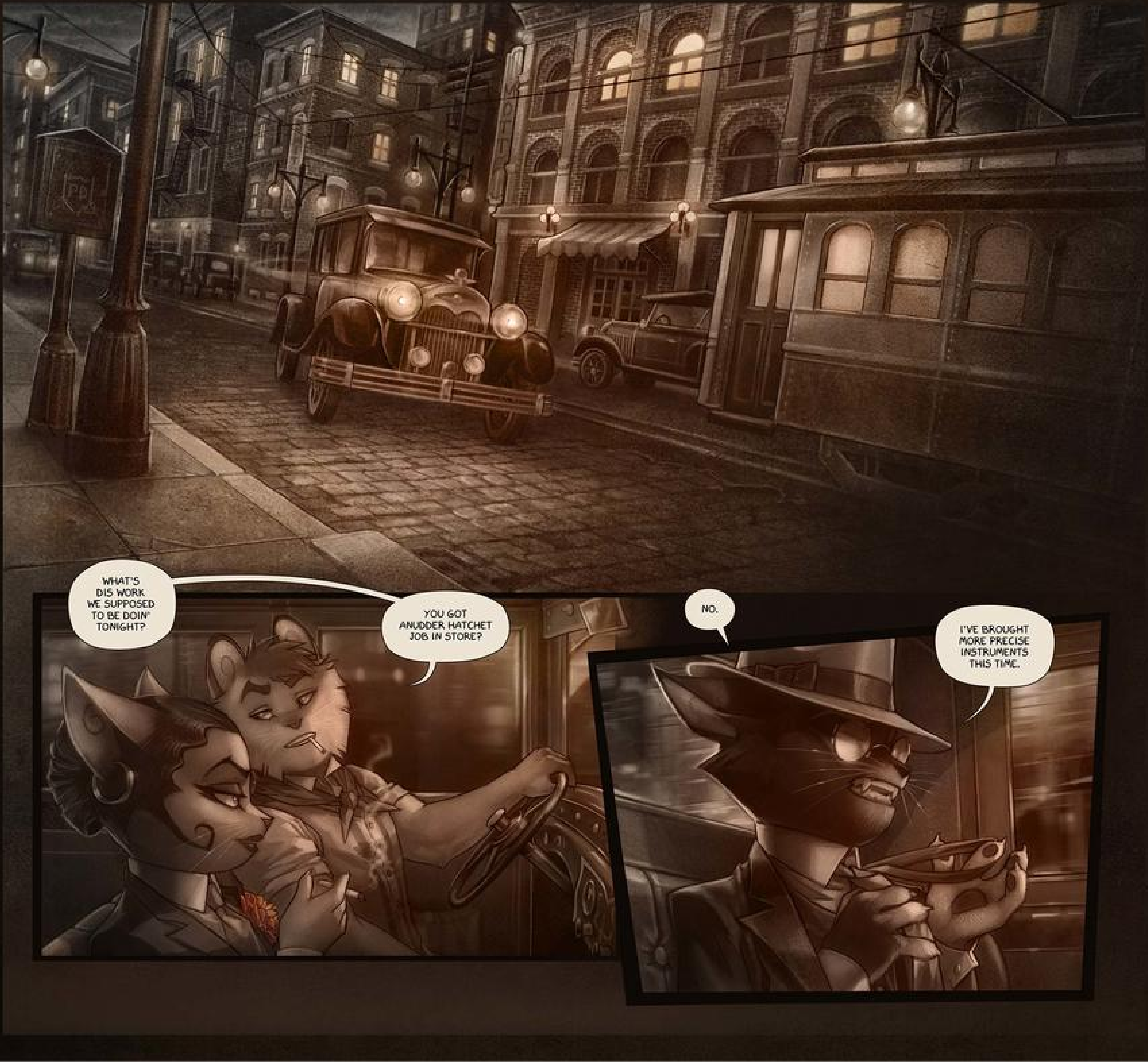

OR ELSE YOU ARE LOST AGAIN.
ALONE IN DE DARK, NOT SURE IF YOU COMIN' OR GOIN', DEAD OR ALIVE...
BUT YOU ARE WHERE YOU SUPPOSE TO BE, HERE – WHERE HE WANTED YOU, SO WE CAN TAKE UP DE PATH TOGETHER.
NOW YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE IT GOES?
TOWARD PROFESSIONAL COMPLICATIONS? MORE FORTUNE TELLING? YOU'RE LESS INERT IN YOUR OFF HOURS THAN I SUPPOSED, BUT WHATEVER YOUR PLANS FOR THIS MENAGERIE OF ODDITIES, CONSIDER ME UNINVOLVED.
I HAVE MY OWN PATH LAID OUT. IT INCLUDES DOING MY JOB TONIGHT, WHETHER YOU'RE COMING OR NOT.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
RRRRK
MISS, PLEASE DON'T TOUCH—
STAY A LITTLE LONGER. WE HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
WE'LL PUT IT RIGHT HERE.

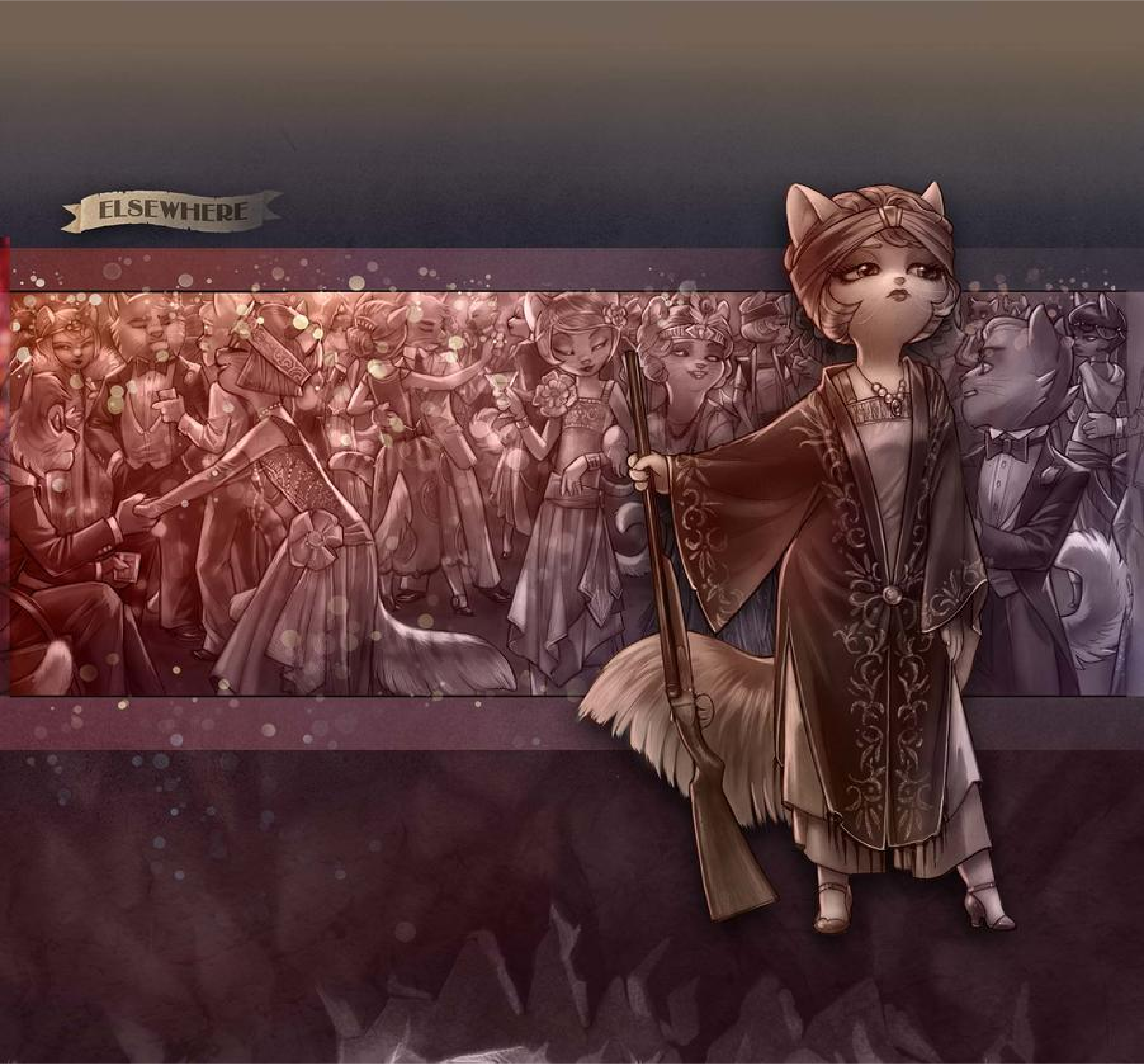

I FIGURE DIS ONE, HE'LL WANNA TINK IT OVER.
SO WE GONNA SEND A GIFT WID YOU, TO WATCH OUT FOR YOU – GIVE YOU A LITTLE TIME AND HELP YOU GET YOU MIND RIGHT.
DE SAME GIFT MAITRE CARREFOUR SENT TO WATCH AND GUIDE US – OUR *DIABLE*.
CLAK
CLINK
CLINK
LEBLANC L'ANCIEN.
AH... I'LL PASS ON THE *DIABLE*, THANK Y—
THIS'LL BE IN THE WAY.
AND YOU CAN CALL ME ZULIE IF YOU LIKE.

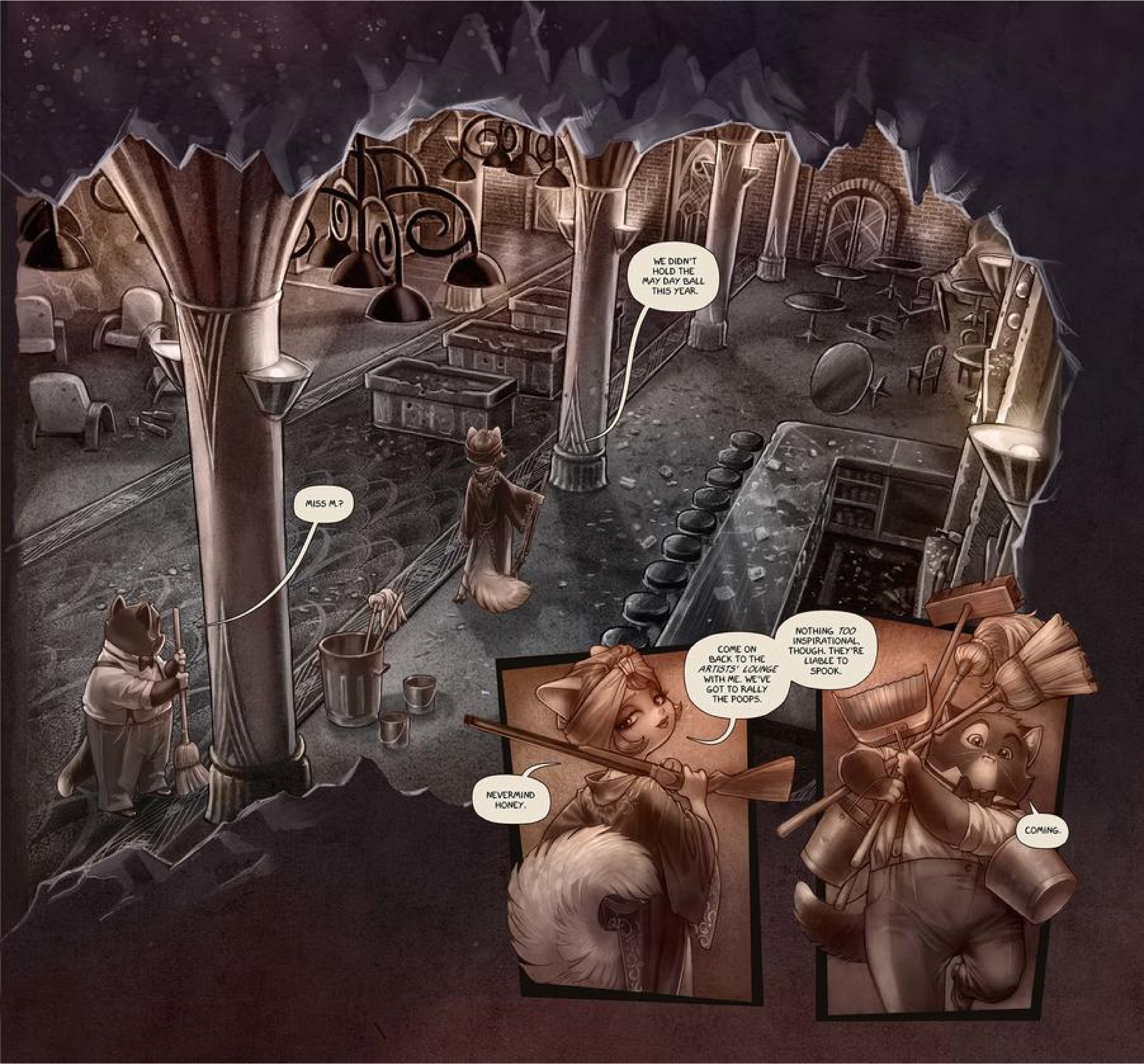


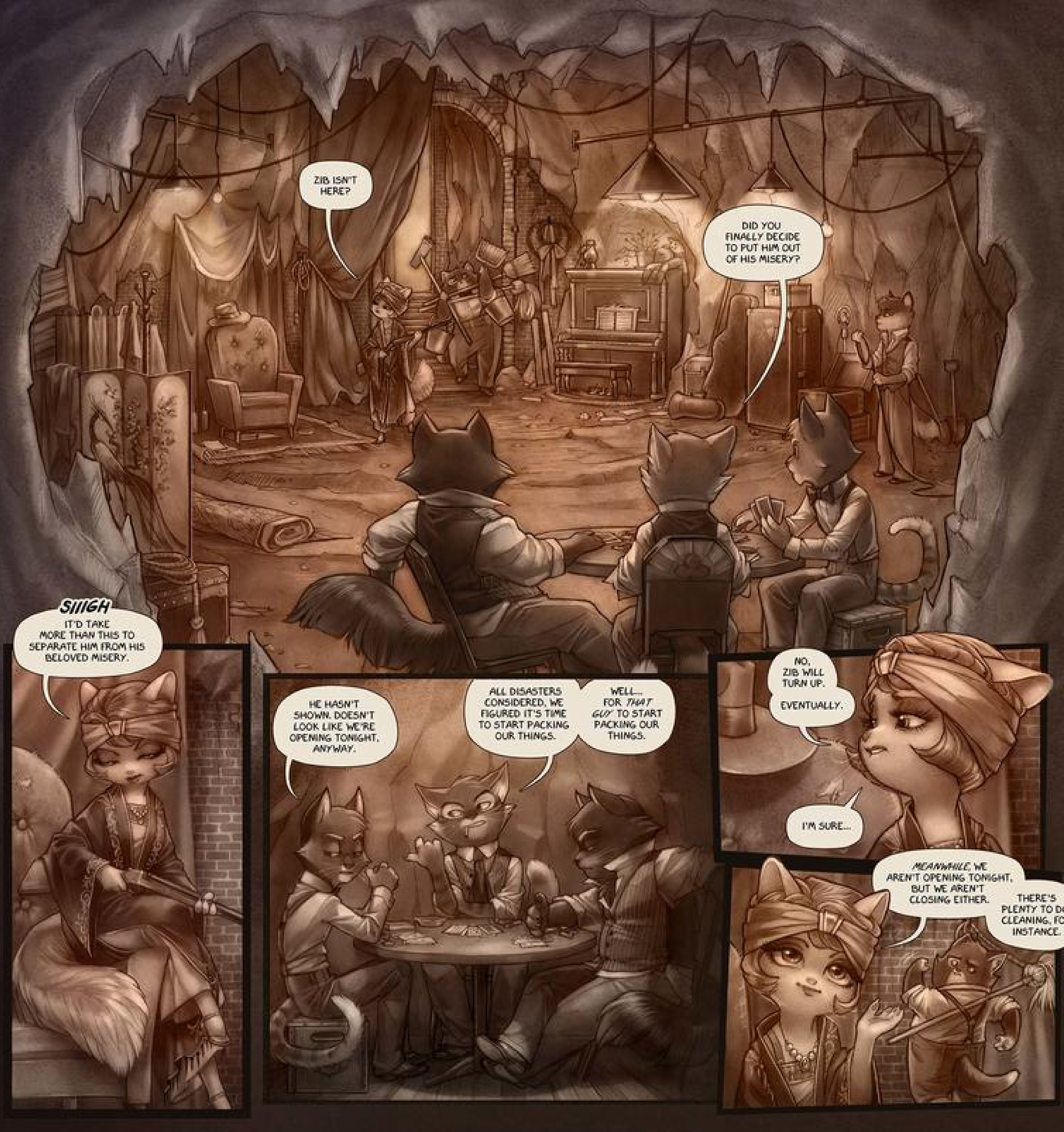

SO WHO YOU TINK LIT UP DAT PIG FARM?
MUSTA BEEN DEM PIGS.
I SAW *RÉVOLUTION* IN DOSE BEADY EYES.
OH, WHY? DEY WAS SO WELL FED.
DOSE FARM BOYS WAS FEUDIN' WID SOMEBODY. ALL I KNOW, DEY TAKE SOME GUNS AN' NEVER COME BACK.
MAIS NON! DEY RUSHED IN. DAT REVENGE BUSINESS...
YOU GOT TO TAKE TIME.
YOU KNOW DAT, BUT DON' GET IDEAS.
WHAT I GAVE YOU, YOU'LL SEE DAT'S A GOOD TING.

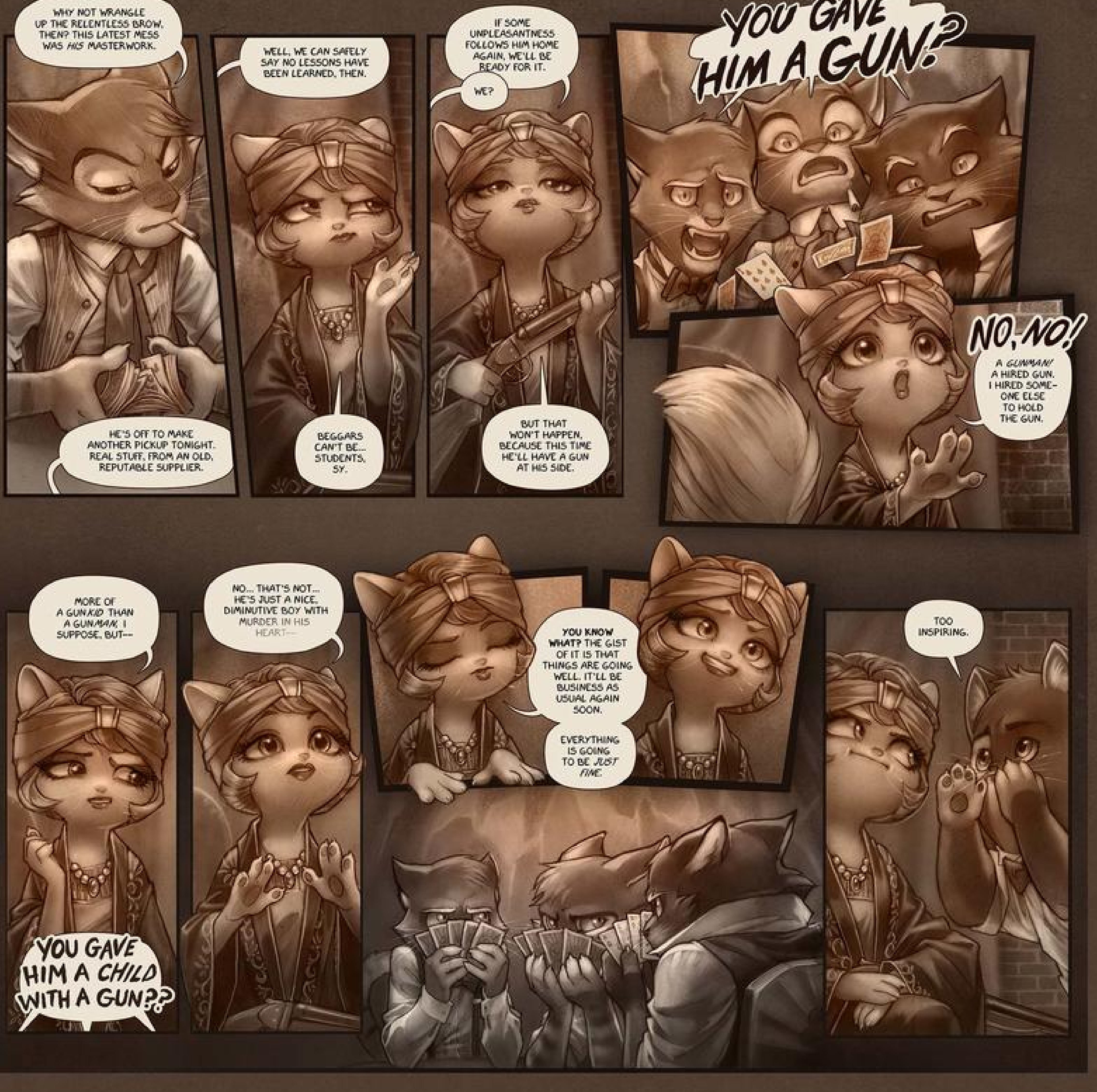

YOU LET LEBLANC GUIDE YOU, HE'LL SHOW YOU DE WAY, KEEP YOU SAFE...
...EVEN MAKE YOU POWERFUL. BUT HE GOT A HOT TEMPER TOO.
SO DON' CROSS HIM OR HE'LL EAT YOU FROM INSIDE OUT.
YOU'RE CONFUSING *GERMS* FOR SPIRITS.

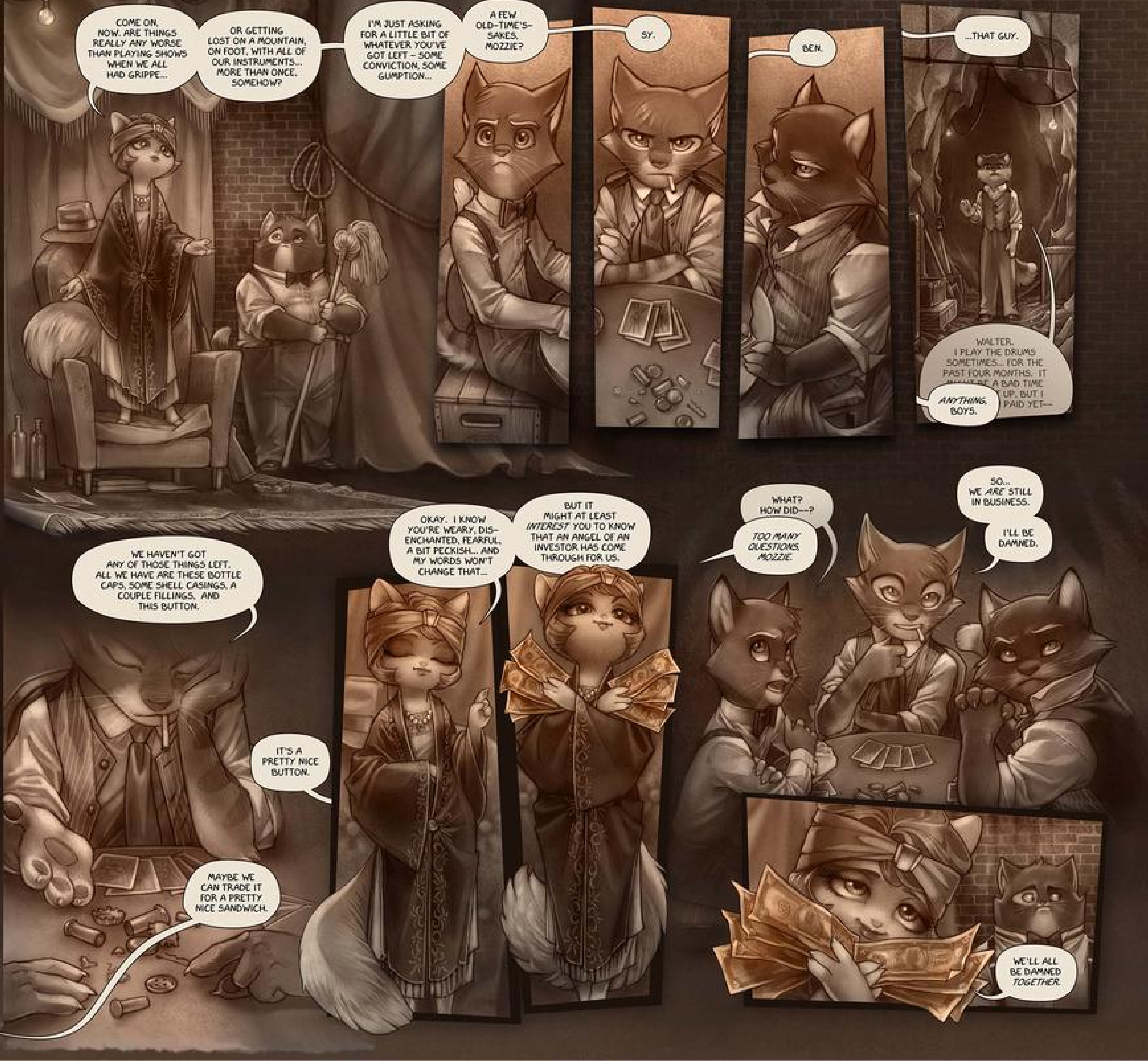

WHAT'S DIS WORK WE SUPPOSED TO BE DOIN' TONIGHT?
YOU GOT ANUDDER HATCHET JOB IN STORE?
NO.
I'VE BROUGHT MORE PRECISE INSTRUMENTS THIS TIME.

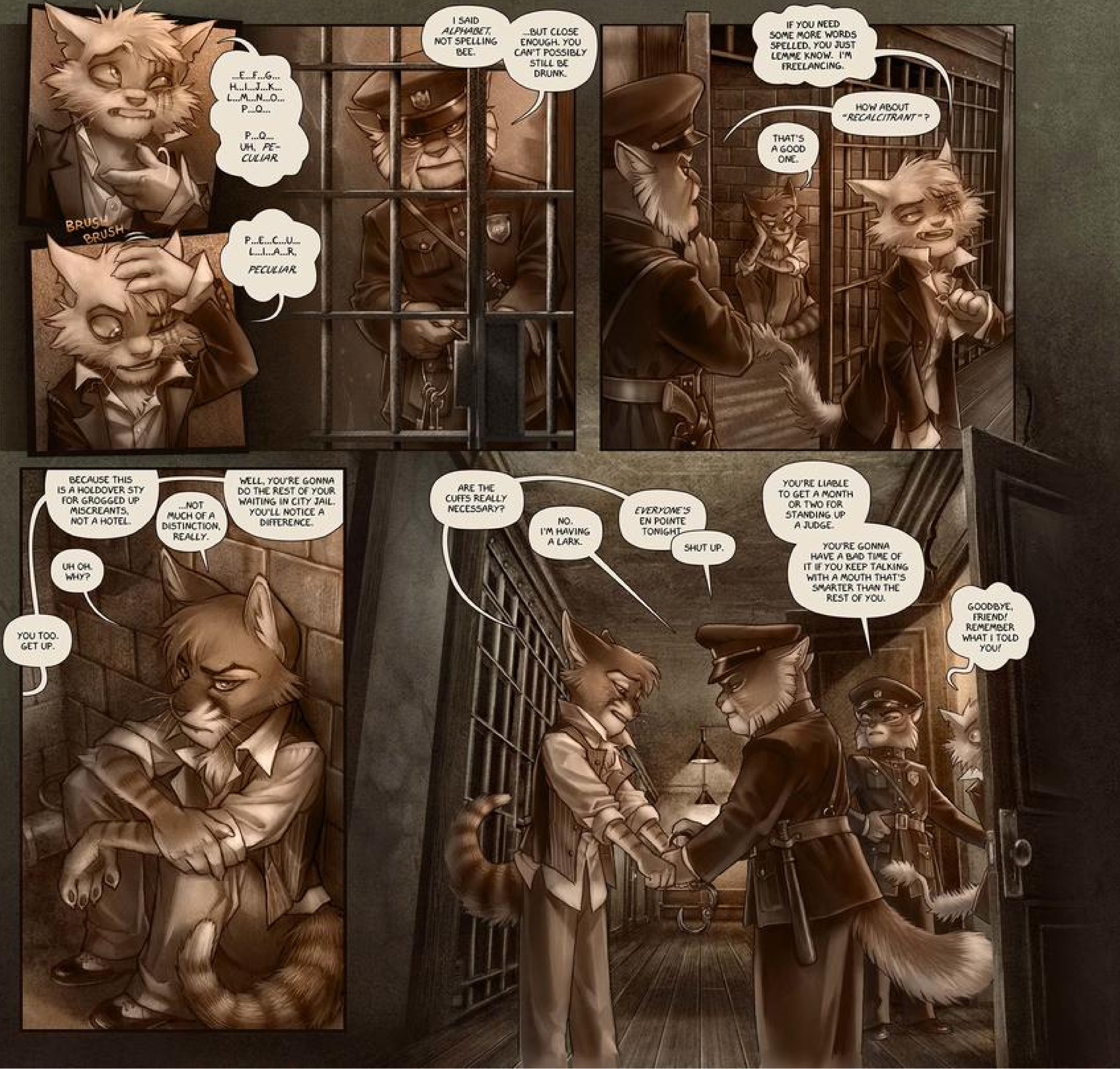

ELSEWHERE

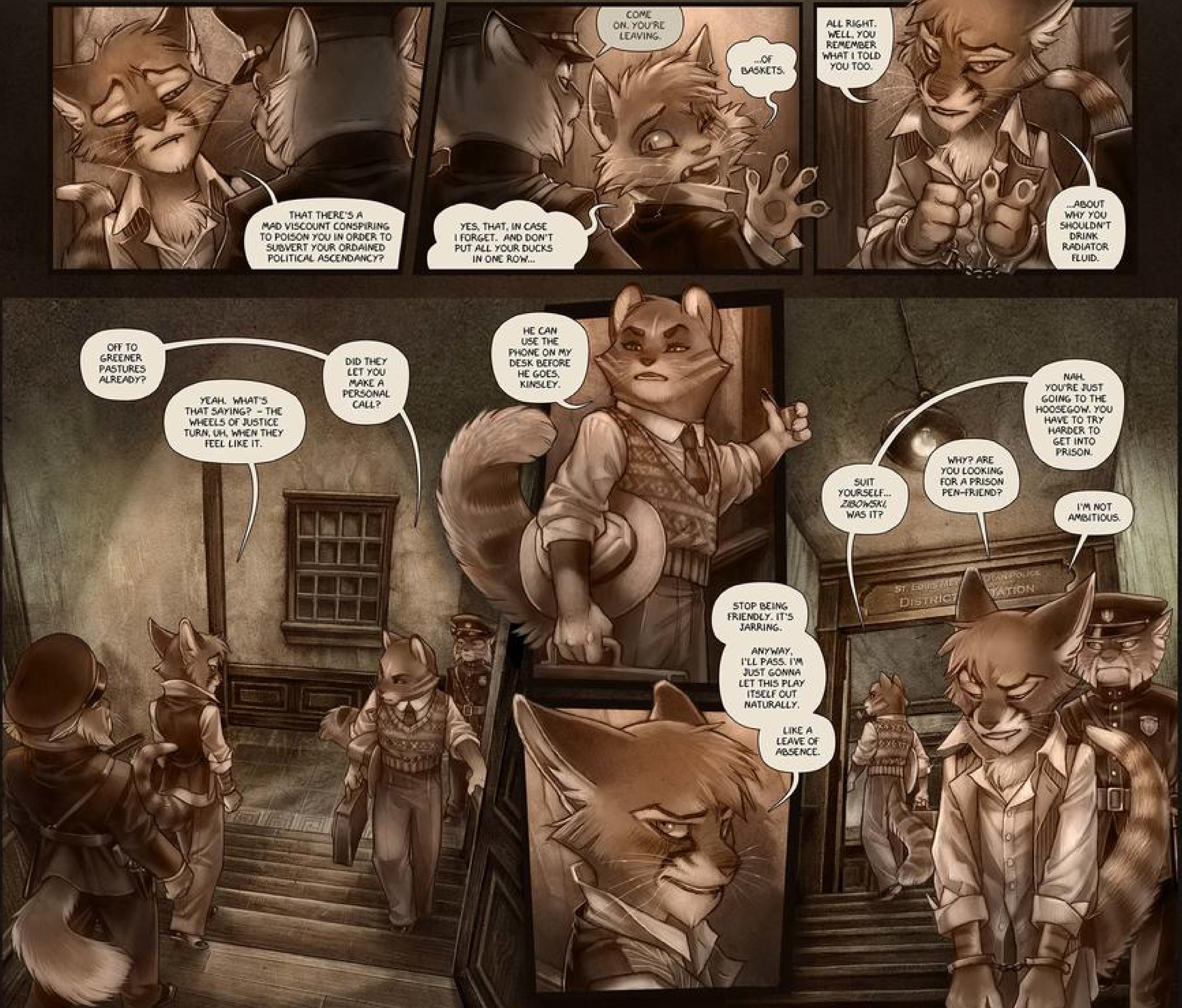

MISS M.?
WE DIDN'T HOLD THE MAY DAY BALL THIS YEAR.
NEVERMIND HONEY.
COME ON BACK TO THE *ARTISTS' LOUNGE* WITH ME. WE'VE GOT TO RALLY THE POOPS.
NOTHING *TOO* INSPIRATIONAL, THOUGH. THEY'RE LIABLE TO SPOOK.
COMING.

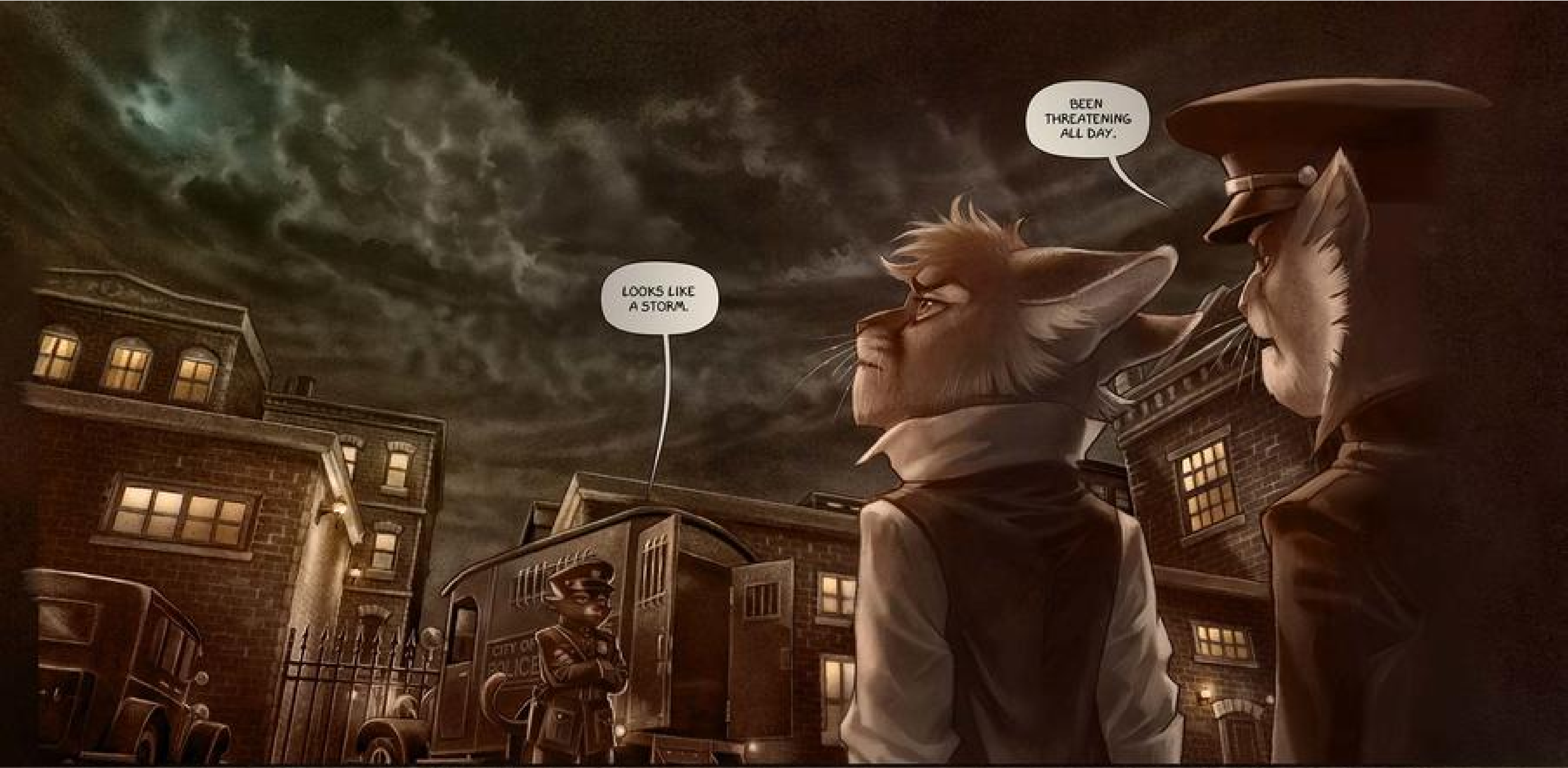

ZIB ISN'T HERE?
DID YOU FINALLY DECIDE TO PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY?
SIIIGH
IT'D TAKE MORE THAN THIS TO SEPARATE HIM FROM HIS BELOVED MISERY.
HE HASN'T SHOWN. DOESN'T LOOK LIKE WE'RE OPENING TONIGHT, ANYWAY.
ALL DISASTERS CONSIDERED, WE FIGURED IT'S TIME TO START PACKING OUR THINGS.
WELL... FOR *THAT GUY* TO START PACKING OUR THINGS.
NO, ZIB WILL TURN UP.
EVENTUALLY.
I'M SURE...
MEANWHILE, WE AREN'T OPENING TONIGHT, BUT WE AREN'T CLOSING EITHER.
THERE'S PLENTY TO DO. CLEANING, FOR INSTANCE.

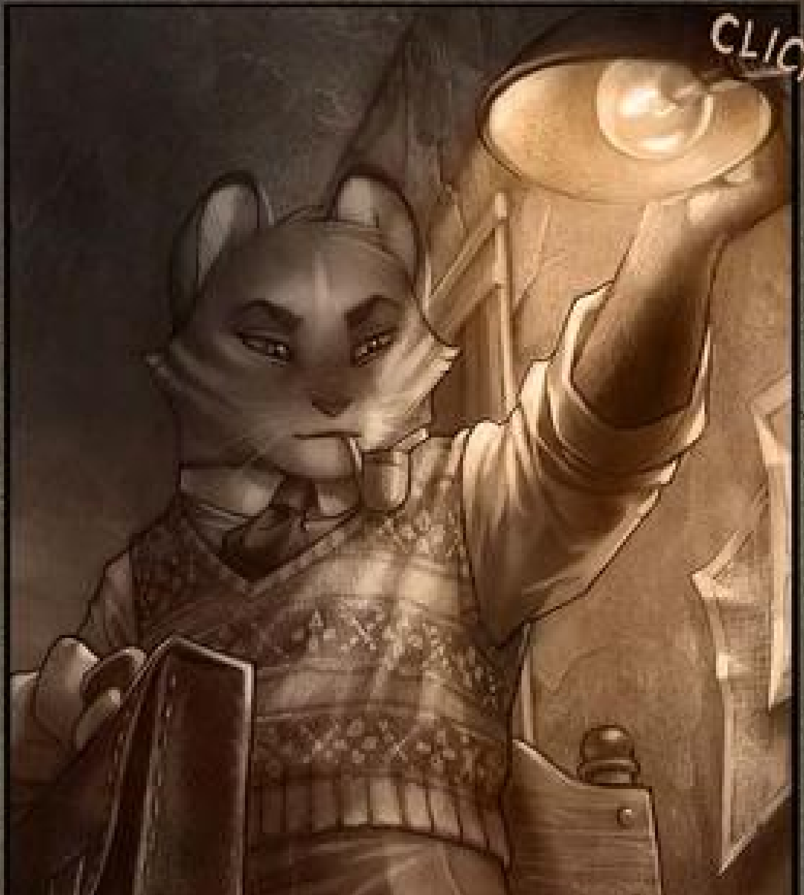

WHY NOT WRANGLE UP THE RELENTLESS BROW, THEN? THIS LATEST MESS WAS *HIS* MASTERWORK.
HE'S OFF TO MAKE ANOTHER PICKUP TONIGHT. REAL STUFF, FROM AN OLD, REPUTABLE SUPPLIER.
WELL, WE CAN SAFELY SAY NO LESSONS HAVE BEEN LEARNED, THEN.
BEGGARS CAN'T BE... STUDENTS, SY.
IF SOME UNPLEASANTNESS FOLLOWS HIM HOME AGAIN, WE'LL BE READY FOR IT.
WE?
BUT THAT WON'T HAPPEN, BECAUSE THIS TIME HE'LL HAVE A GUN AT HIS SIDE.
YOU GAVE HIM A GUN?
NO, NO!
A *GUNMAN!* A HIRED GUN. I HIRED SOMEONE ELSE TO HOLD THE GUN.
MORE OF A GUN*KID* THAN A GUN*MAN*, I SUPPOSE, BUT--
YOU GAVE HIM A *CHILD* WITH A GUN??
NO... THAT'S NOT... HE'S JUST A NICE, DIMINUTIVE BOY WITH MURDER IN HIS HEART---
YOU KNOW WHAT? THE GIST OF IT IS THAT THINGS ARE GOING WELL. IT'LL BE BUSINESS AS USUAL AGAIN SOON.
EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE *JUST FINE.*
TOO INSPIRING.

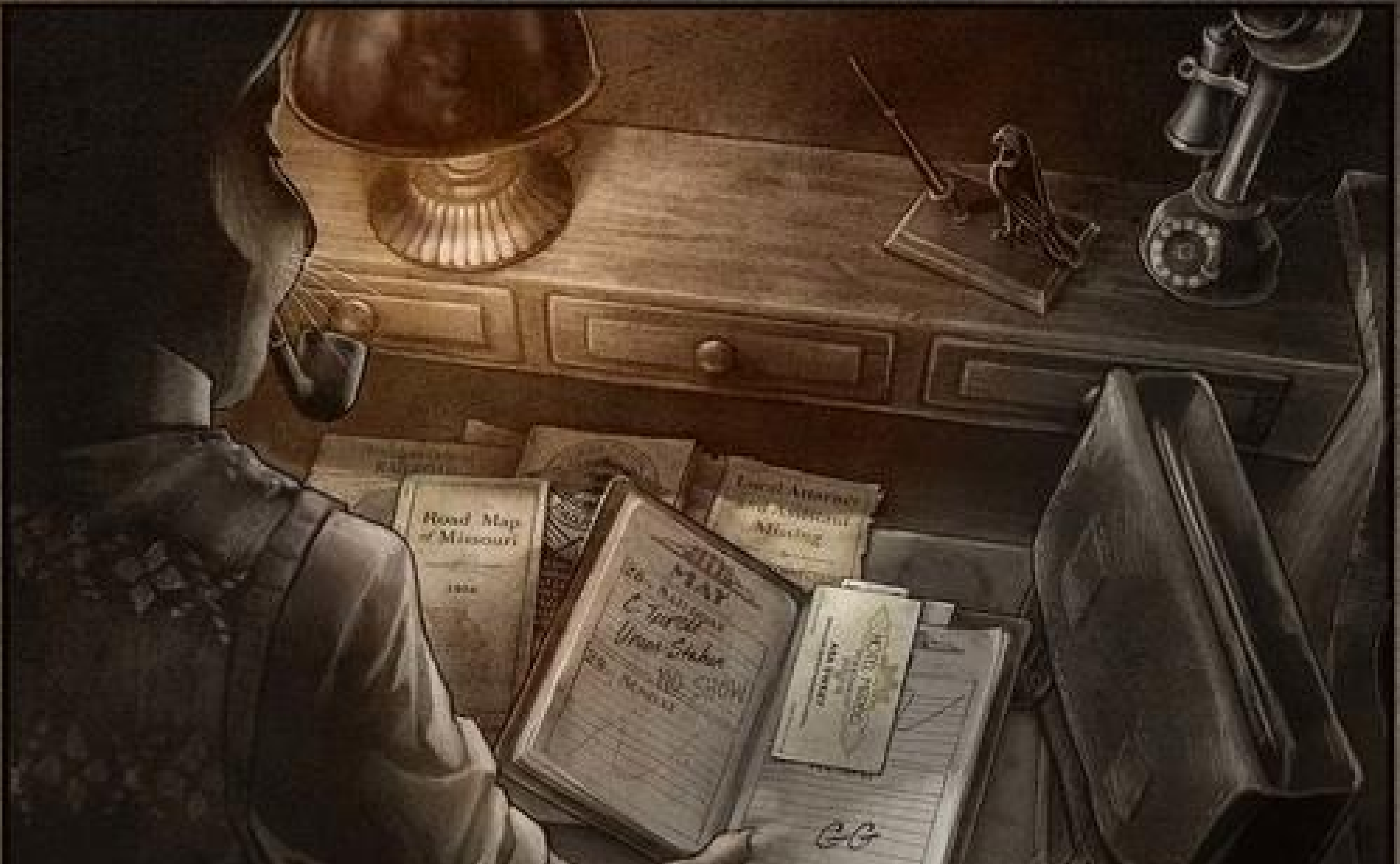

COME ON, NOW. ARE THINGS REALLY ANY WORSE THAN PLAYING SHOWS WHEN WE ALL HAD GRIPPE...
OR GETTING LOST ON A MOUNTAIN, ON FOOT, WITH ALL OF OUR INSTRUMENTS... MORE THAN ONCE, SOMEHOW?
I'M JUST ASKING FOR A LITTLE BIT OF WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT LEFT – SOME CONVICTION, SOME GUMPTION...
A FEW OLD-TIME'S-SAKES, MOZZIE?
SY.
BEN.
...THAT GUY.
WALTER. I PLAY THE DRUMS SOMETIMES... FOR THE PAST FOUR MONTHS. IT MIGHT BE A BAD TIME UP, BUT I PAID YET--
ANYTHING, BOYS.
WE HAVEN'T GOT ANY OF THOSE THINGS LEFT. ALL WE HAVE ARE THESE BOTTLE CAPS, SOME SHELL CASINGS, A COUPLE FILLINGS, AND THIS BUTTON.
IT'S A PRETTY NICE BUTTON.
MAYBE WE CAN TRADE IT FOR A PRETTY NICE SANDWICH.
OKAY. I KNOW YOU'RE WEARY, DISENCHANTED, FEARFUL, A BIT PECKISH... AND MY WORDS WON'T CHANGE THAT...
BUT IT MIGHT AT LEAST *INTEREST* YOU TO KNOW THAT AN ANGEL OF AN INVESTOR HAS COME THROUGH FOR US.
WHAT? HOW DID--?
TOO MANY QUESTIONS, MOZZIE.
SO... WE *ARE* STILL IN BUSINESS.
I'LL BE DAMNED.
WE'LL ALL BE DAMNED *TOGETHER*.

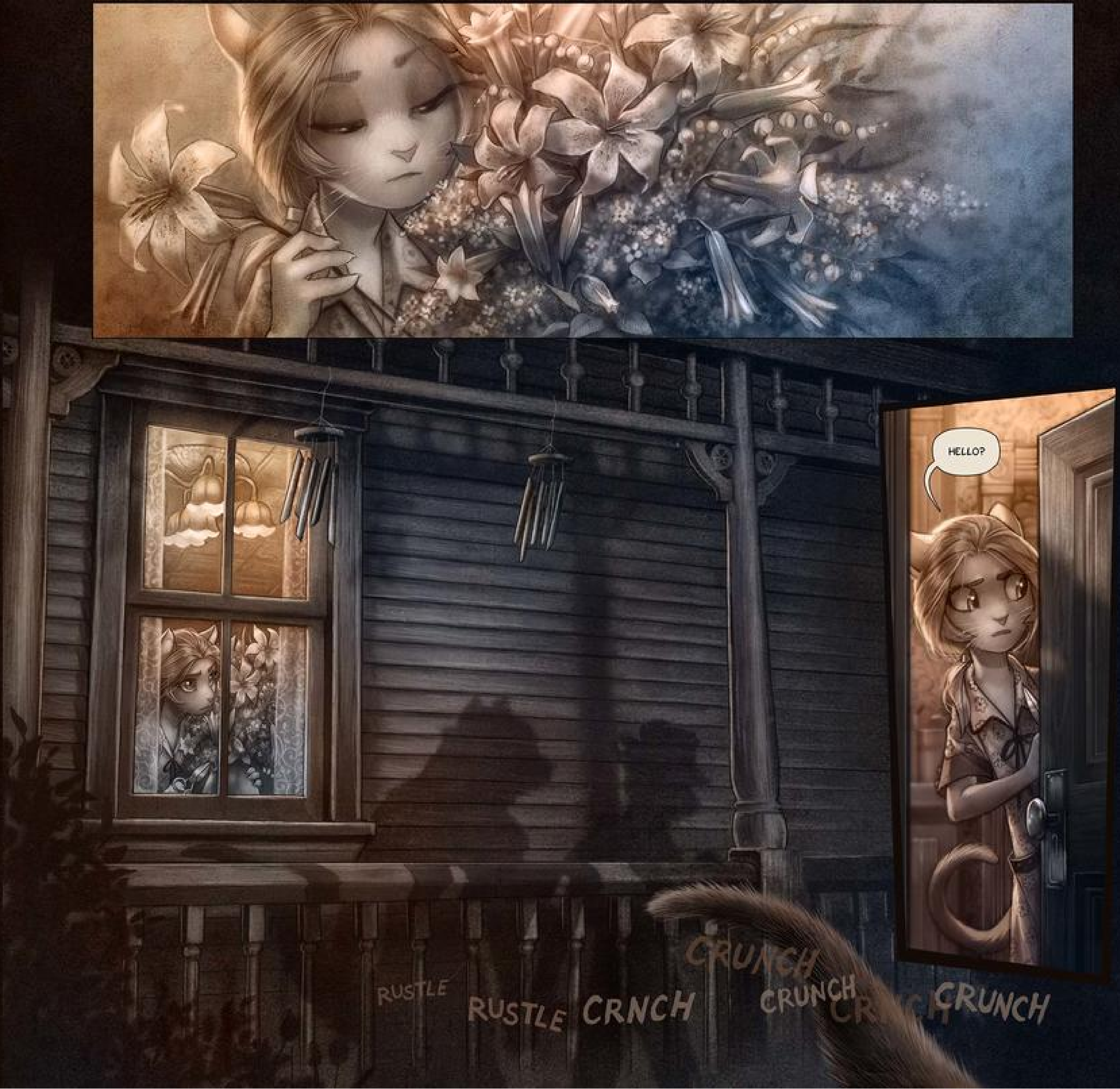

...E...F...G... H...I...J...K... L...M...N...O... P...Q...
P...Q... UH, *PE-CULIAR.*
BRUSH BRUSH
P...E...C...U... L...I...A...R. *PECULIAR.*
I SAID *ALPHABET,* NOT SPELLING BEE.
...BUT CLOSE ENOUGH. YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY STILL BE DRUNK.
IF YOU NEED SOME MORE WORDS SPELLED, YOU JUST LEMME KNOW. I'M FREELANCING.
HOW ABOUT *"RECALCITRANT"*?
THAT'S A GOOD ONE.
BECAUSE THIS IS A HOLDOVER STY FOR GROGGED UP MISCREANTS, NOT A HOTEL.
...NOT MUCH OF A DISTINCTION, REALLY.
WELL, YOU'RE GONNA DO THE REST OF YOUR WAITING IN CITY JAIL. YOU'LL NOTICE A DIFFERENCE.
UH OH. WHY?
YOU TOO. GET UP.
ARE THE CUFFS REALLY NECESSARY?
NO. I'M HAVING A LARK.
EVERYONE'S EN POINTE TONIGHT.
SHUT UP.
YOU'RE LIABLE TO GET A MONTH OR TWO FOR STANDING UP A JUDGE.
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE A BAD TIME OF IT IF YOU KEEP TALKING WITH A MOUTH THAT'S SMARTER THAN THE REST OF YOU.
GOODBYE, FRIEND! REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU!

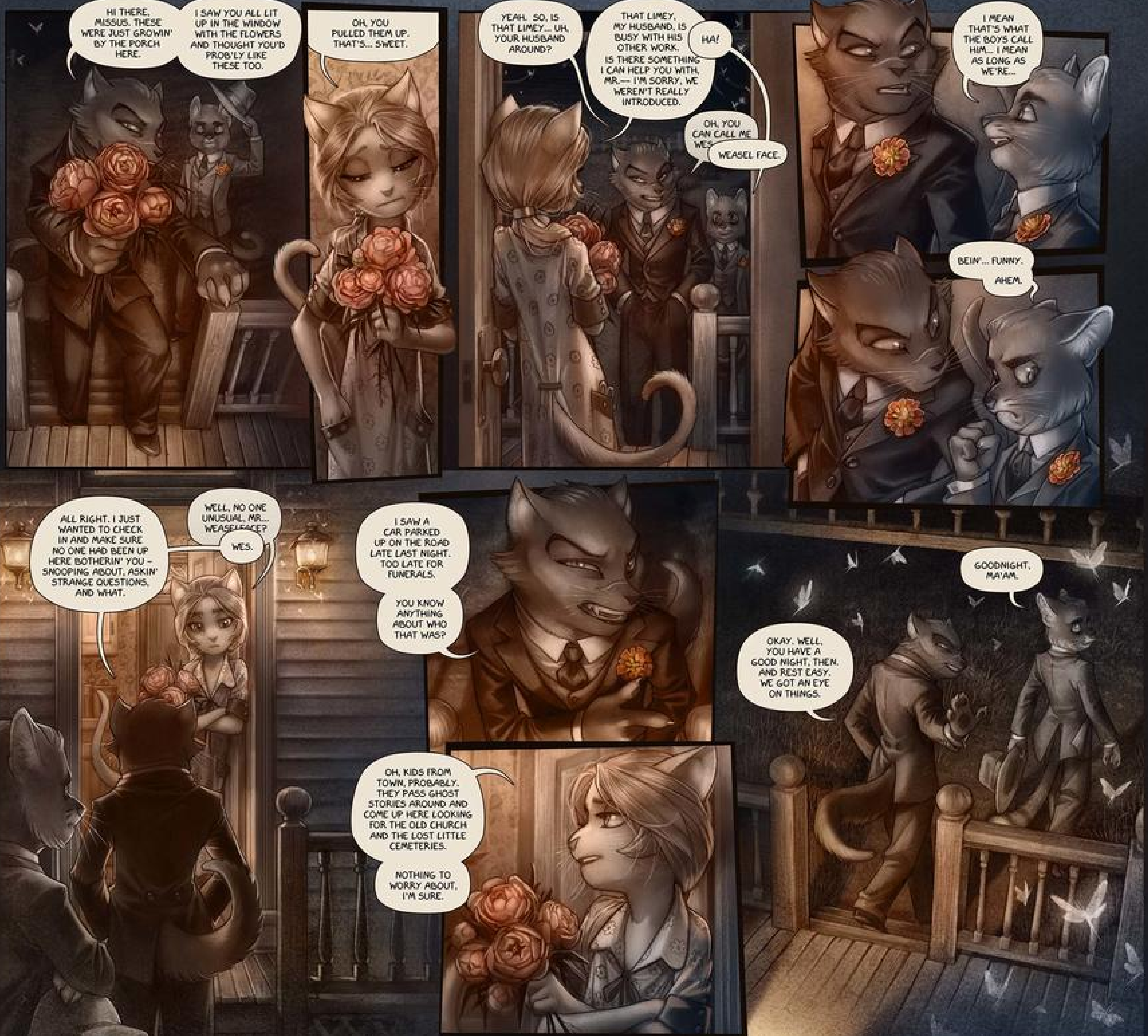

THAT THERE'S A MAD VISCOUNT CONSPIRING TO POISON YOU IN ORDER TO SUBVERT YOUR ORDAINED POLITICAL ASCENDANCY?
COME ON, YOU'RE LEAVING.
YES, THAT, IN CASE I FORGET. AND DON'T PUT ALL YOUR DUCKS IN ONE ROW...
...OF BASKETS.
ALL RIGHT. WELL, YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU TOO.
...ABOUT WHY YOU SHOULDN'T DRINK RADIATOR FLUID.
OFF TO GREENER PASTURES ALREADY?
DID THEY LET YOU MAKE A PERSONAL CALL?
YEAH. WHAT'S THAT SAYING? – THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE TURN, UH, WHEN THEY FEEL LIKE IT.
HE CAN USE THE PHONE ON MY DESK BEFORE HE GOES, KINSLEY.
STOP BEING FRIENDLY. IT'S JARRING.
ANYWAY, I'LL PASS. I'M JUST GONNA LET THIS PLAY ITSELF OUT NATURALLY.
LIKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.
SUIT YOURSELF... *ZIBOWSKI*, WAS IT?
WHY? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A PRISON PEN-FRIEND?
NAH. YOU'RE JUST GOING TO THE HOOSEGOW. YOU HAVE TO TRY HARDER TO GET INTO PRISON.
I'M NOT AMBITIOUS.

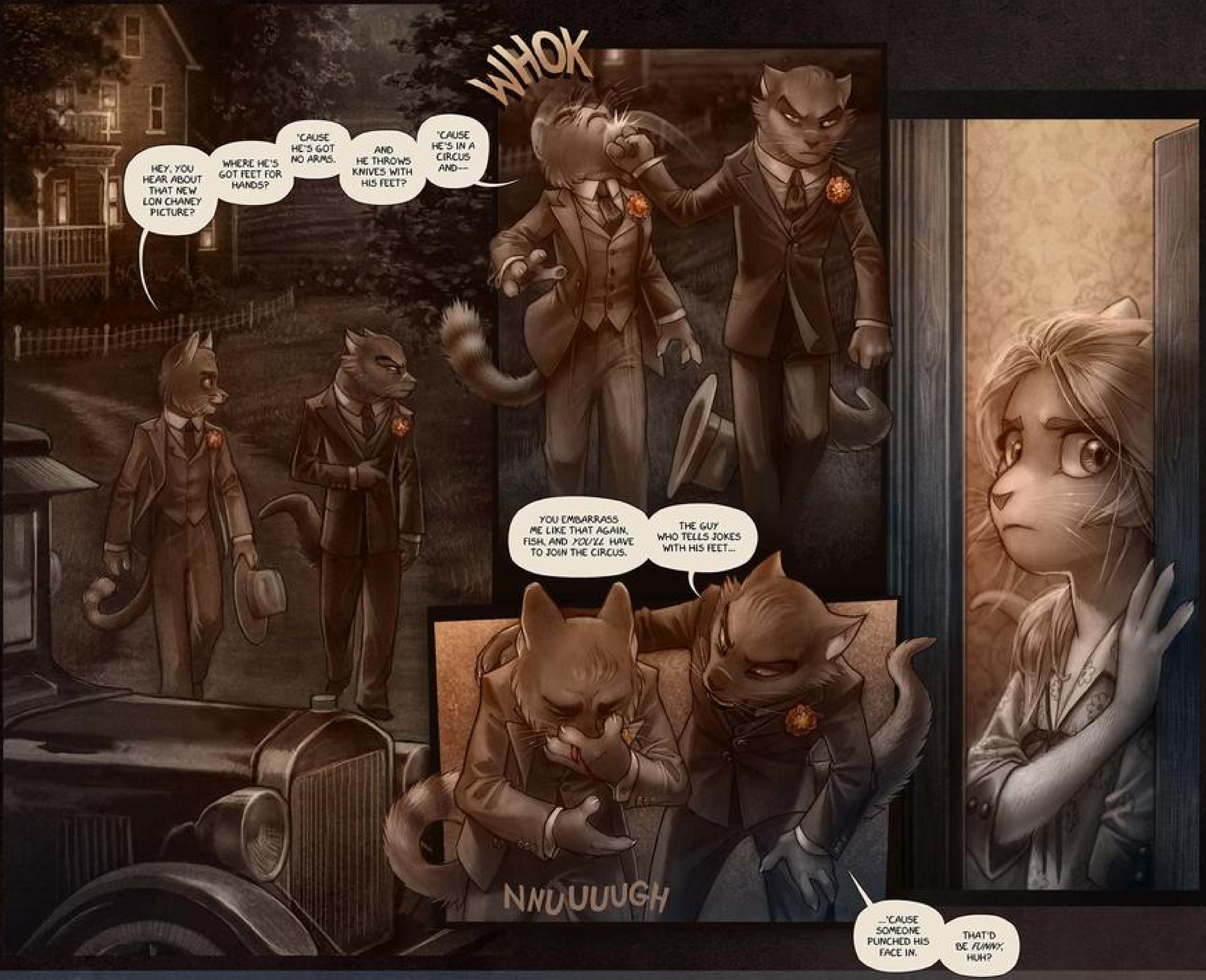

LOOKS LIKE A STORM.
BEEN THREATENING ALL DAY.
POLICE

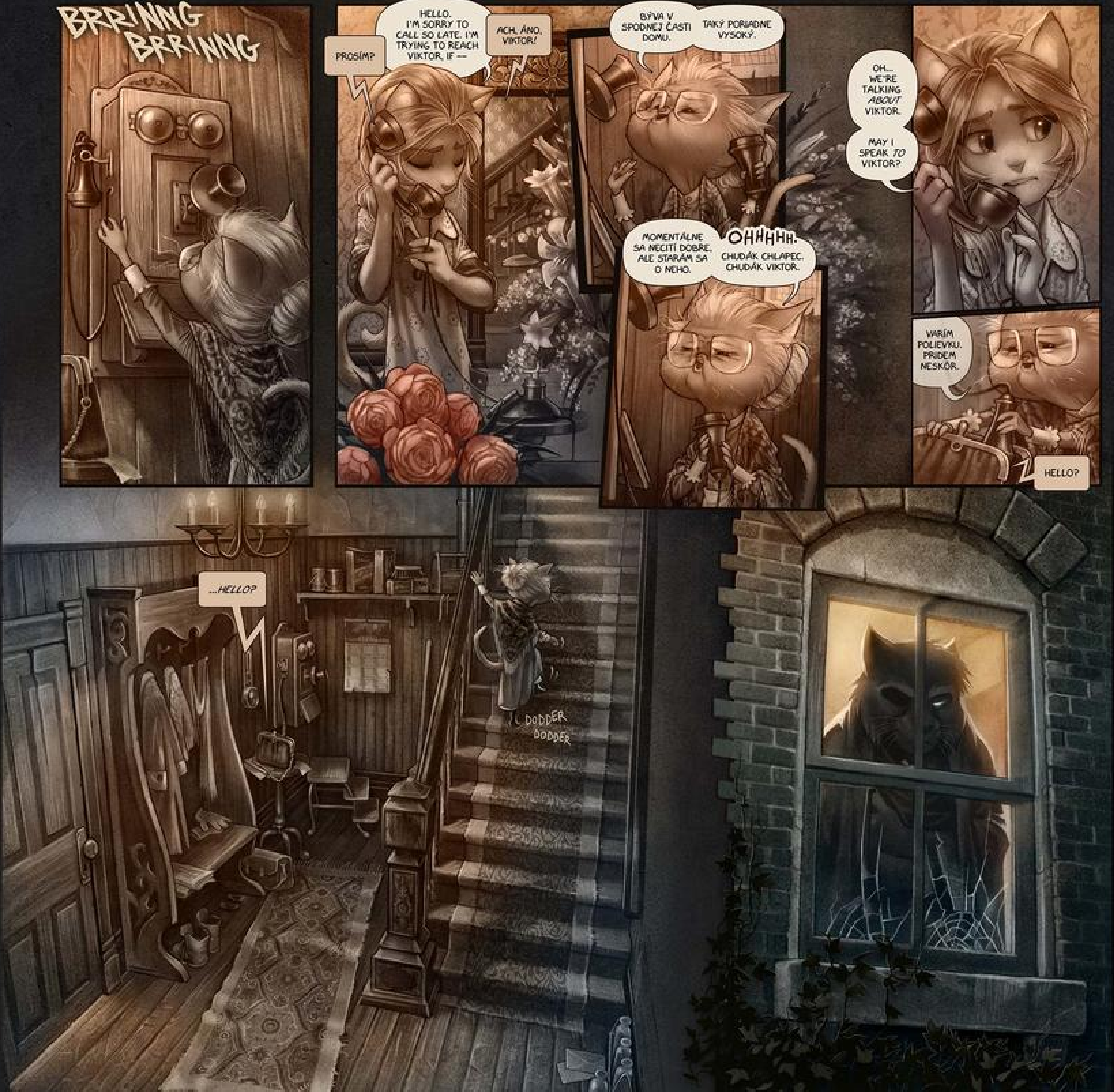

CLICK

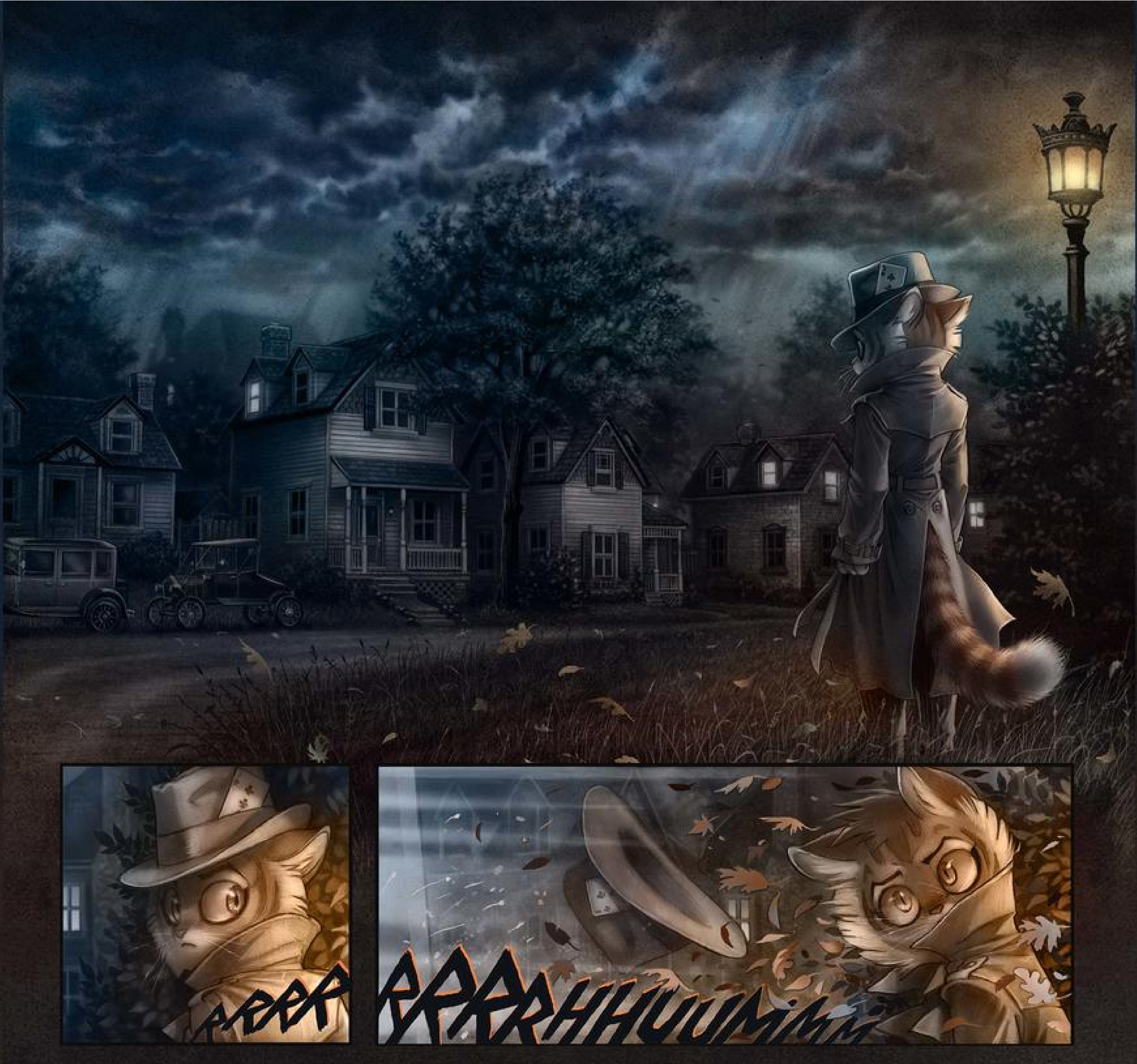

Road Map of Missouri
Local Attorney Missing
MAY
C. Terrell
Union Station
GG

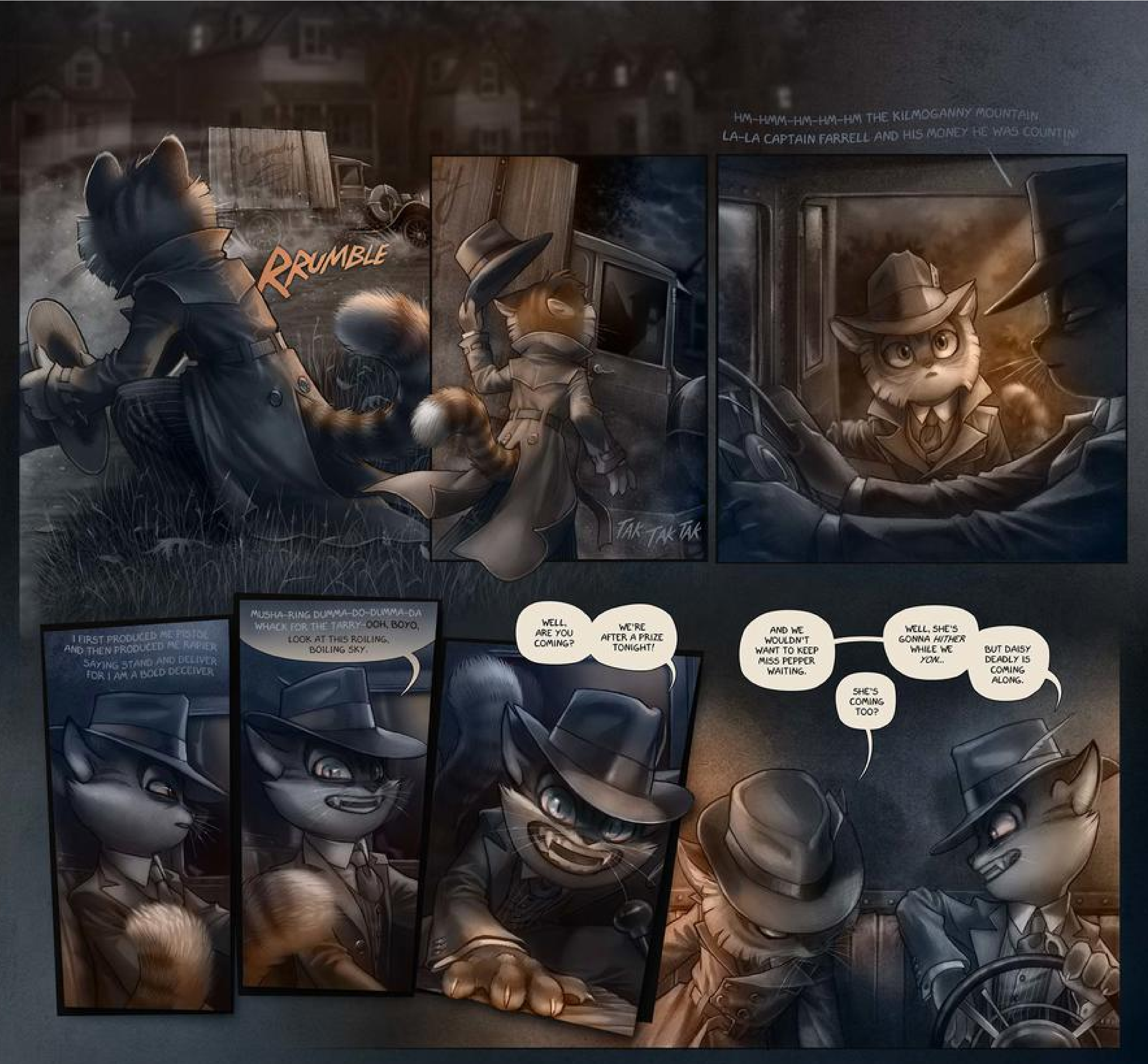

HELLO?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
CRNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH

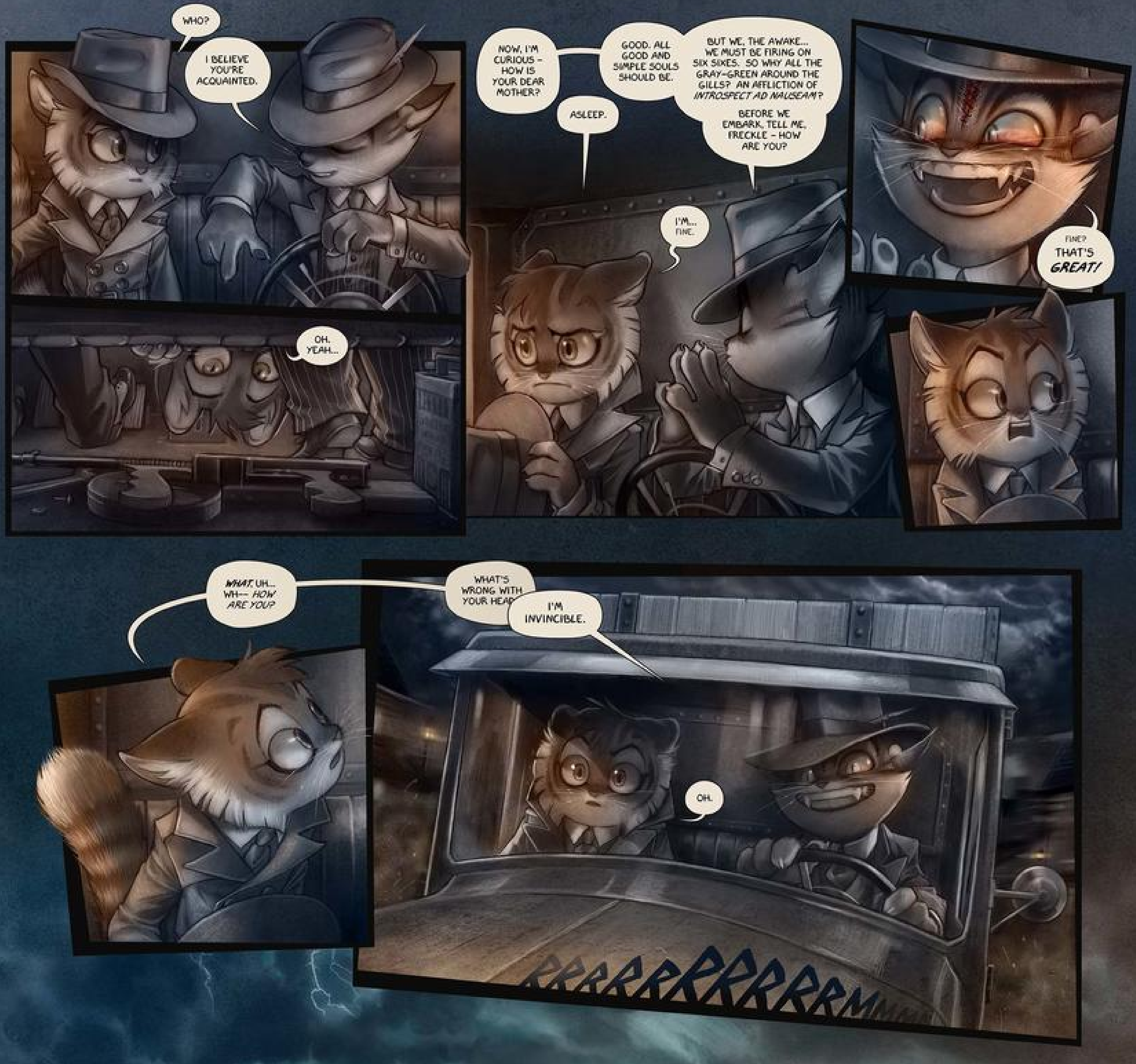

HI THERE, MISSUS. THESE WERE JUST GROWIN' BY THE PORCH HERE.
I SAW YOU ALL LIT UP IN THE WINDOW WITH THE FLOWERS AND THOUGHT YOU'D PROB'LY LIKE THESE TOO.
OH, YOU PULLED THEM UP. THAT'S... SWEET.
YEAH. SO, IS THAT LIMEY... UH, YOUR HUSBAND AROUND?
THAT LIMEY, MY HUSBAND, IS BUSY WITH HIS OTHER WORK. IS THERE SOMETHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH, MR.— I'M SORRY, WE WEREN'T REALLY INTRODUCED.
HA!
OH, YOU CAN CALL ME WES
WEASEL FACE.
I MEAN THAT'S WHAT THE BOYS CALL HIM... I MEAN AS LONG AS WE'RE...
BEIN'... FUNNY.
AHEM.
ALL RIGHT. I JUST WANTED TO CHECK IN AND MAKE SURE NO ONE HAD BEEN UP HERE BOTHERIN' YOU – SNOOPING ABOUT, ASKIN' STRANGE QUESTIONS, AND WHAT.
WELL, NO ONE UNUSUAL, MR... WEASELFACE?
WES.
I SAW A CAR PARKED UP ON THE ROAD LATE LAST NIGHT. TOO LATE FOR FUNERALS.
YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WHO THAT WAS?
OH, KIDS FROM TOWN, PROBABLY. THEY PASS GHOST STORIES AROUND AND COME UP HERE LOOKING FOR THE OLD CHURCH AND THE LOST LITTLE CEMETERIES.
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, I'M SURE.
GOODNIGHT, MA'AM.
OKAY. WELL, YOU HAVE A GOOD NIGHT, THEN. AND REST EASY. WE GOT AN EYE ON THINGS.


HEY, YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT NEW LON CHANEY PICTURE?
WHERE HE'S GOT FEET FOR HANDS?
'CAUSE HE'S GOT NO ARMS.
AND HE THROWS KNIVES WITH HIS FEET?
'CAUSE HE'S IN A CIRCUS AND—
WHOK
YOU EMBARRASS ME LIKE THAT AGAIN, FISH, AND *YOU'LL* HAVE TO JOIN THE CIRCUS.
THE GUY WHO TELLS JOKES WITH HIS FEET...
NNUUUUGH
...'CAUSE SOMEONE PUNCHED HIS FACE IN.
THAT'D BE *FUNNY*, HUH?


BRRINNG
BRRINNG
PROSÍM?
HELLO. I'M SORRY TO CALL SO LATE. I'M TRYING TO REACH VIKTOR, IF —
ACH, ÁNO, VIKTOR!
BÝVA V SPODNEJ ČASTI DOMU.
TAKÝ PORIADNE VYSOKÝ.
OH... WE'RE TALKING *ABOUT* VIKTOR.
MAY I SPEAK *TO* VIKTOR?
MOMENTÁLNE SA NECITÍ DOBRE. ALE STARÁM SA O NEHO.
OHHHHH. CHUDÁK CHLAPEC. CHUDÁK VIKTOR.
VARÍM POLIEVKU. PRÍDEM NESKÔR.
HELLO?
...HELLO?
DODDER
DODDER


RRRR
RRRRHHUUMMMM

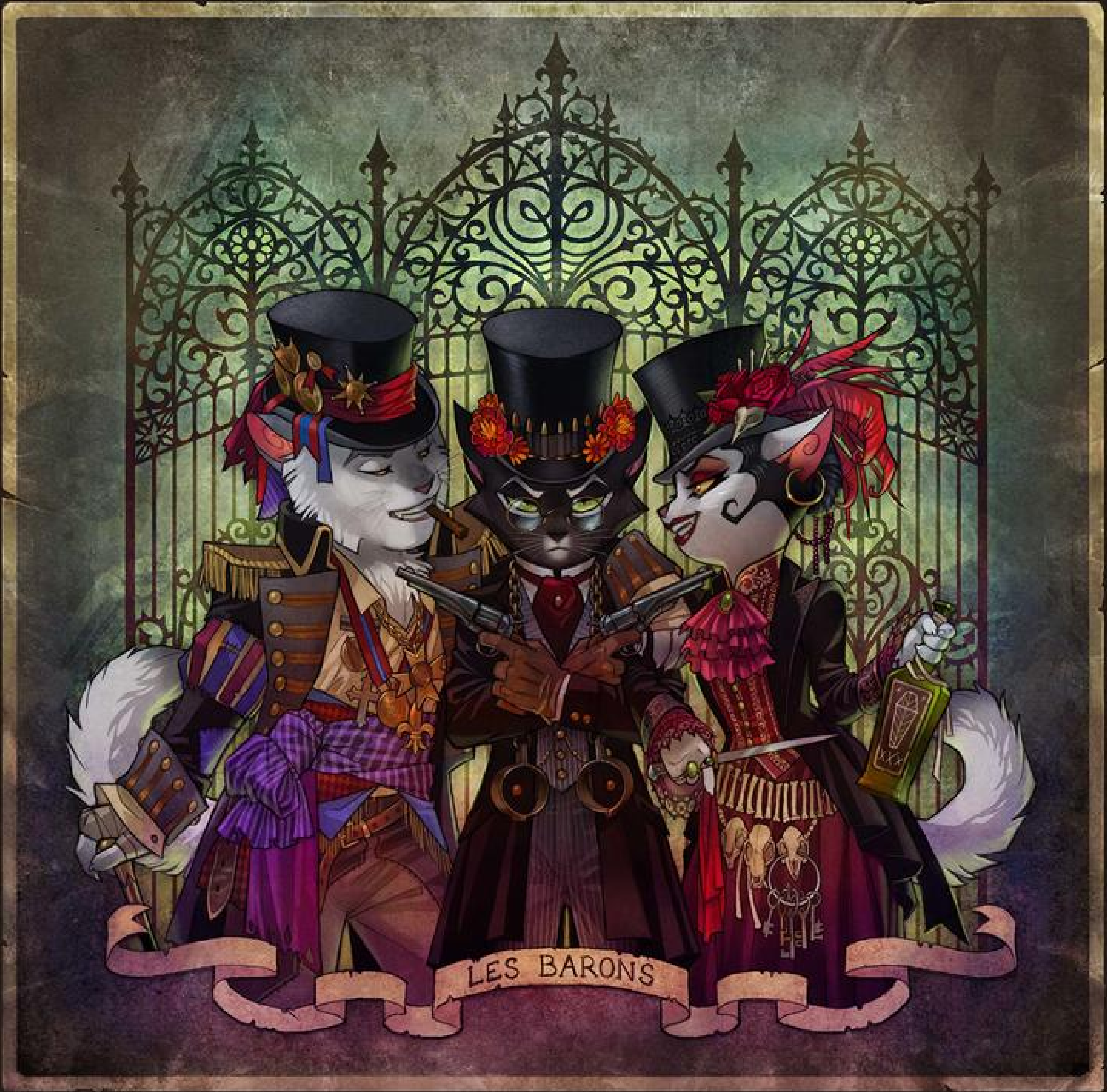

RRUMBLE
TAK TAK TAK
HM-HMM-HM-HM-HM THE KILMOGANNY MOUNTAIN LA-LA CAPTAIN FARRELL AND HIS MONEY HE WAS COUNTIN'
I FIRST PRODUCED ME PISTOL AND THEN PRODUCED ME RAPIER SAYING STAND AND DELIVER FOR I AM A BOLD DECEIVER
MUSHA-RING DUMMA-DO-DUMMA-DA WHACK FOR THE TARRY-OOH, BOYO, LOOK AT THIS ROILING, BOILING SKY.
WELL, ARE YOU COMING?
WE'RE AFTER A PRIZE TONIGHT!
AND WE WOULDN'T WANT TO KEEP MISS PEPPER WAITING.
WELL, SHE'S GONNA *WITHER* WHILE WE *YOWL*...
SHE'S COMING TOO?
BUT DAISY DEADLY IS COMING ALONG.


WHO?
I BELIEVE YOU'RE ACQUAINTED.
OH. YEAH...
NOW, I'M CURIOUS – HOW IS YOUR DEAR MOTHER?
ASLEEP.
GOOD. ALL GOOD AND SIMPLE SOULS SHOULD BE.
BUT WE, THE AWAKE... WE MUST BE FIRING ON SIX SIXES. SO WHY ALL THE GRAY–GREEN AROUND THE GILLS? AN AFFLICTION OF *INTROSPECT AD NAUSEAM*?
BEFORE WE EMBARK, TELL ME, FRECKLE – HOW ARE YOU?
I'M... FINE.
FINE? THAT'S ***GREAT!***
WHAT, UH... WH-- *HOW ARE YOU?*
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR HEA
I'M INVINCIBLE.
OH.
RRRRRRRRRRRRRMmmm

MISSOURI
94
END
DEFIANCE
AUGUSTA

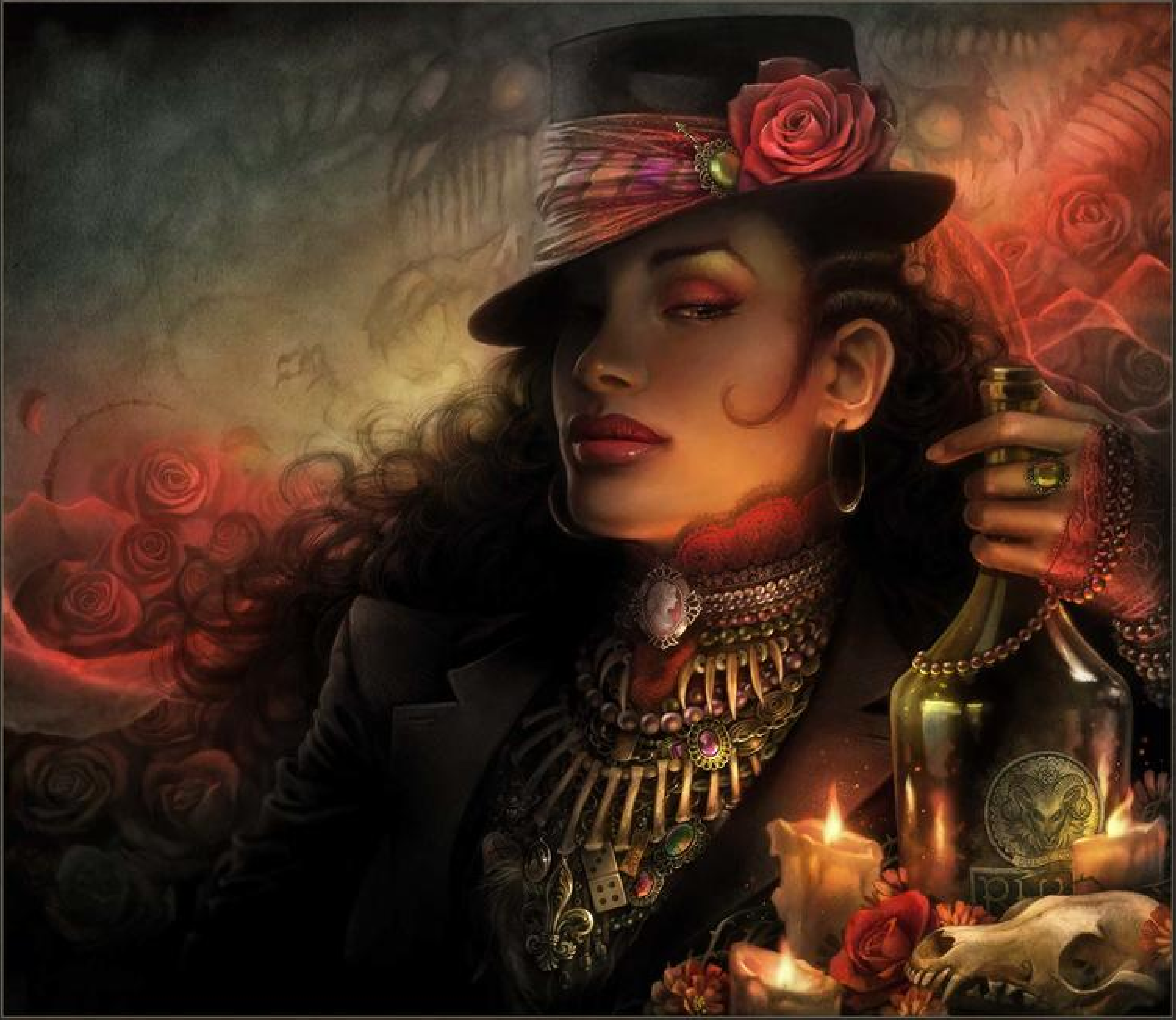
LACKADAISY

SKETCHBOOK

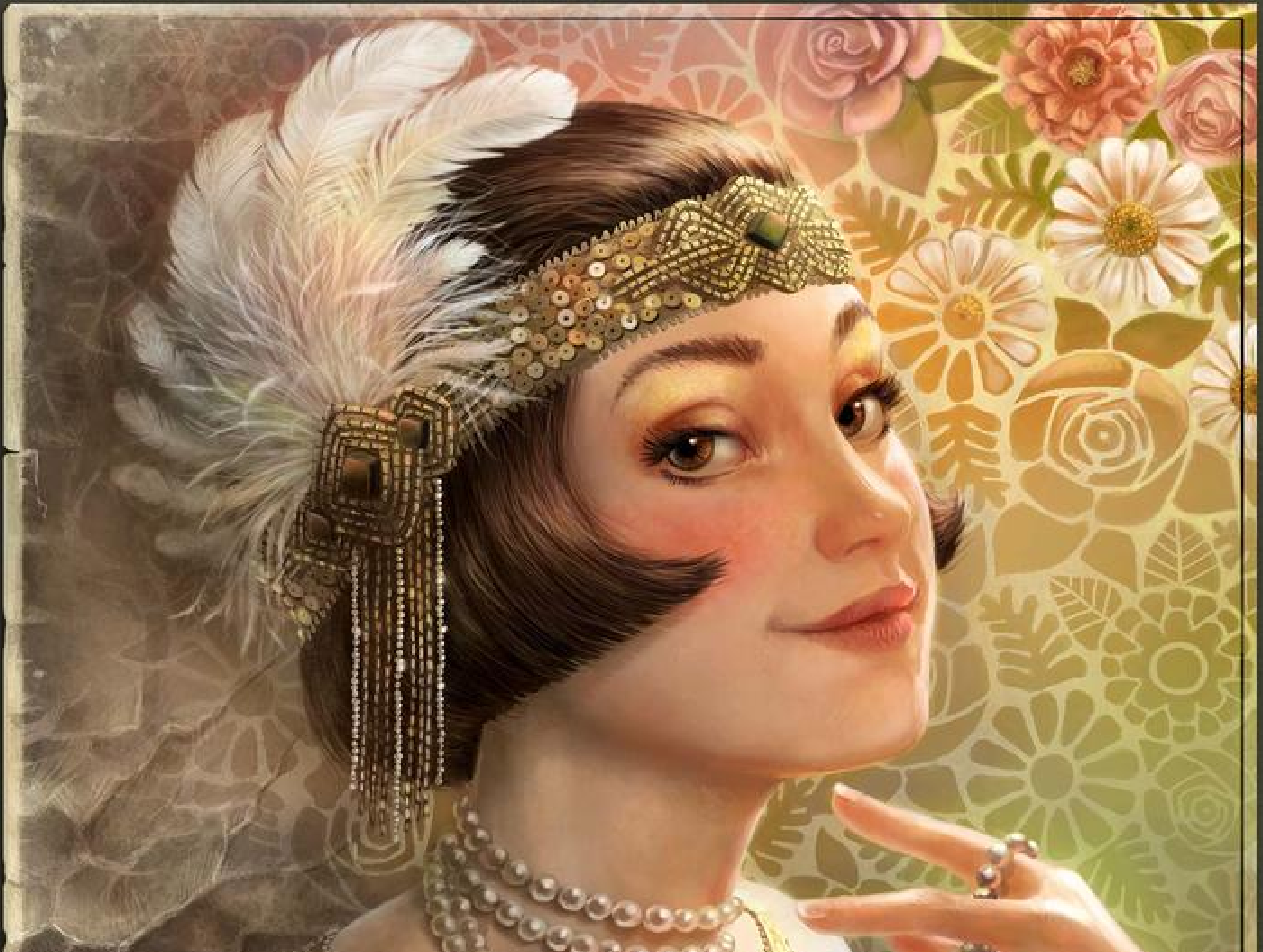


Barony

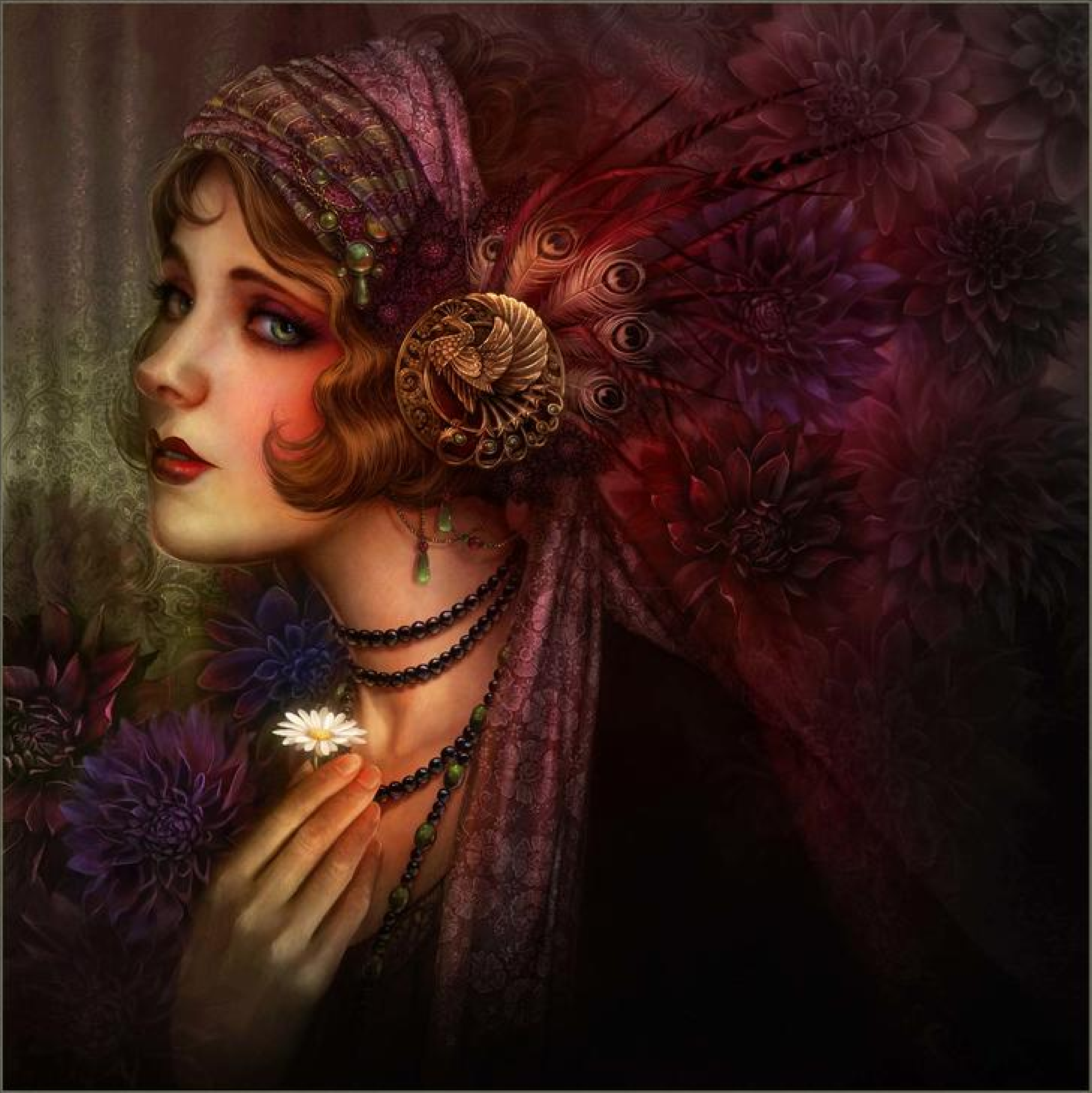
Blueblood



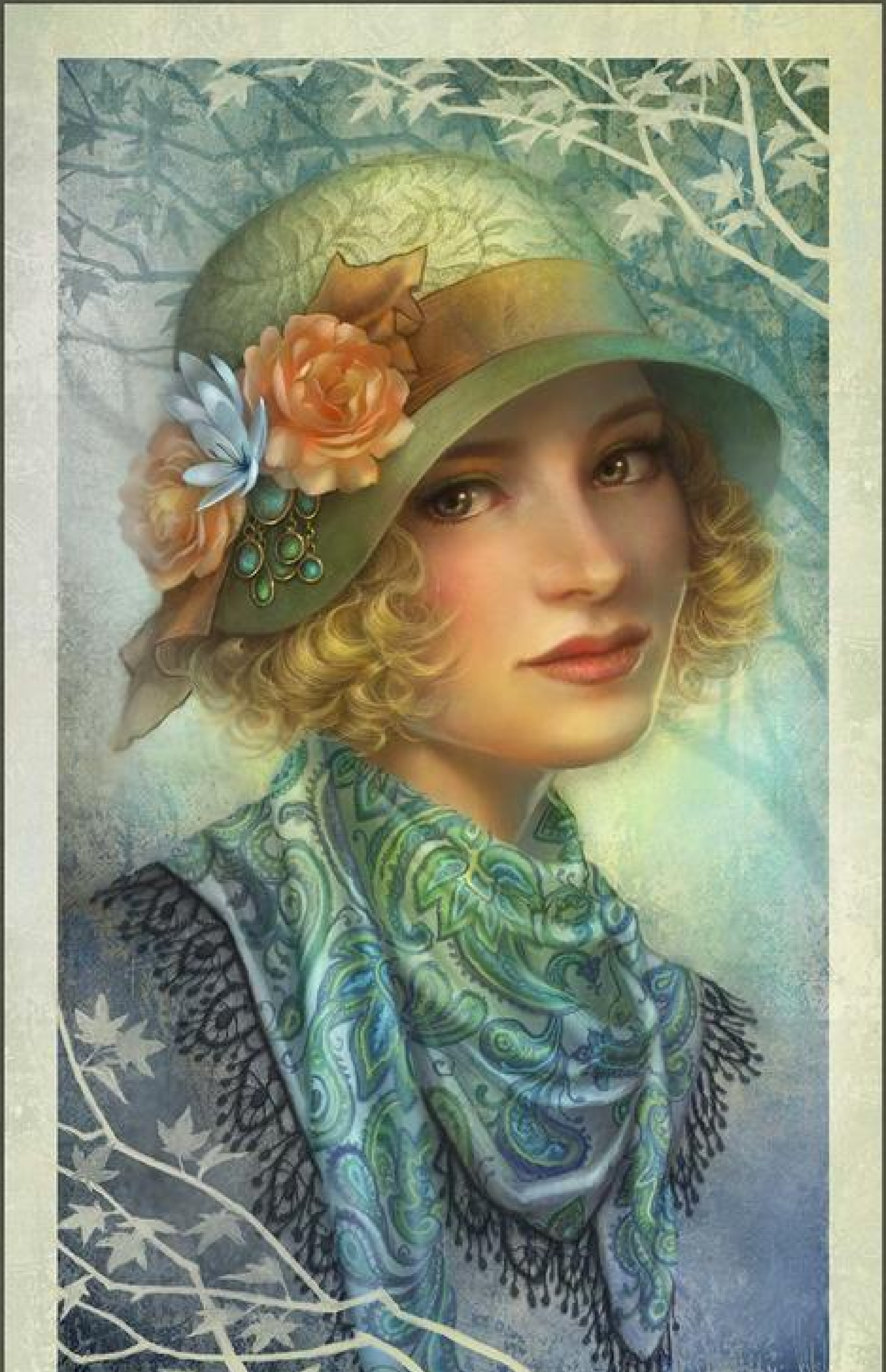
Demon-rum



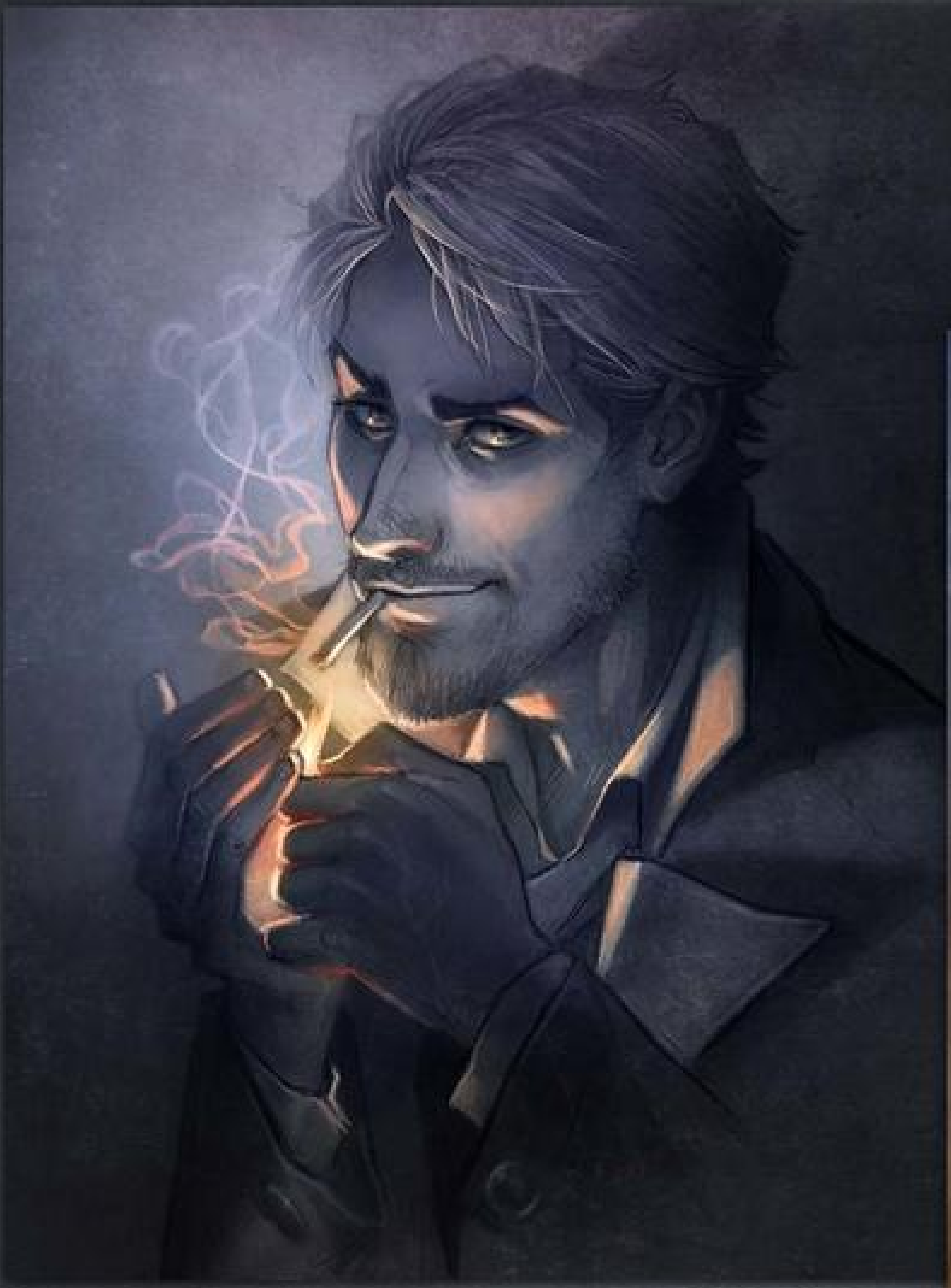
Perennial



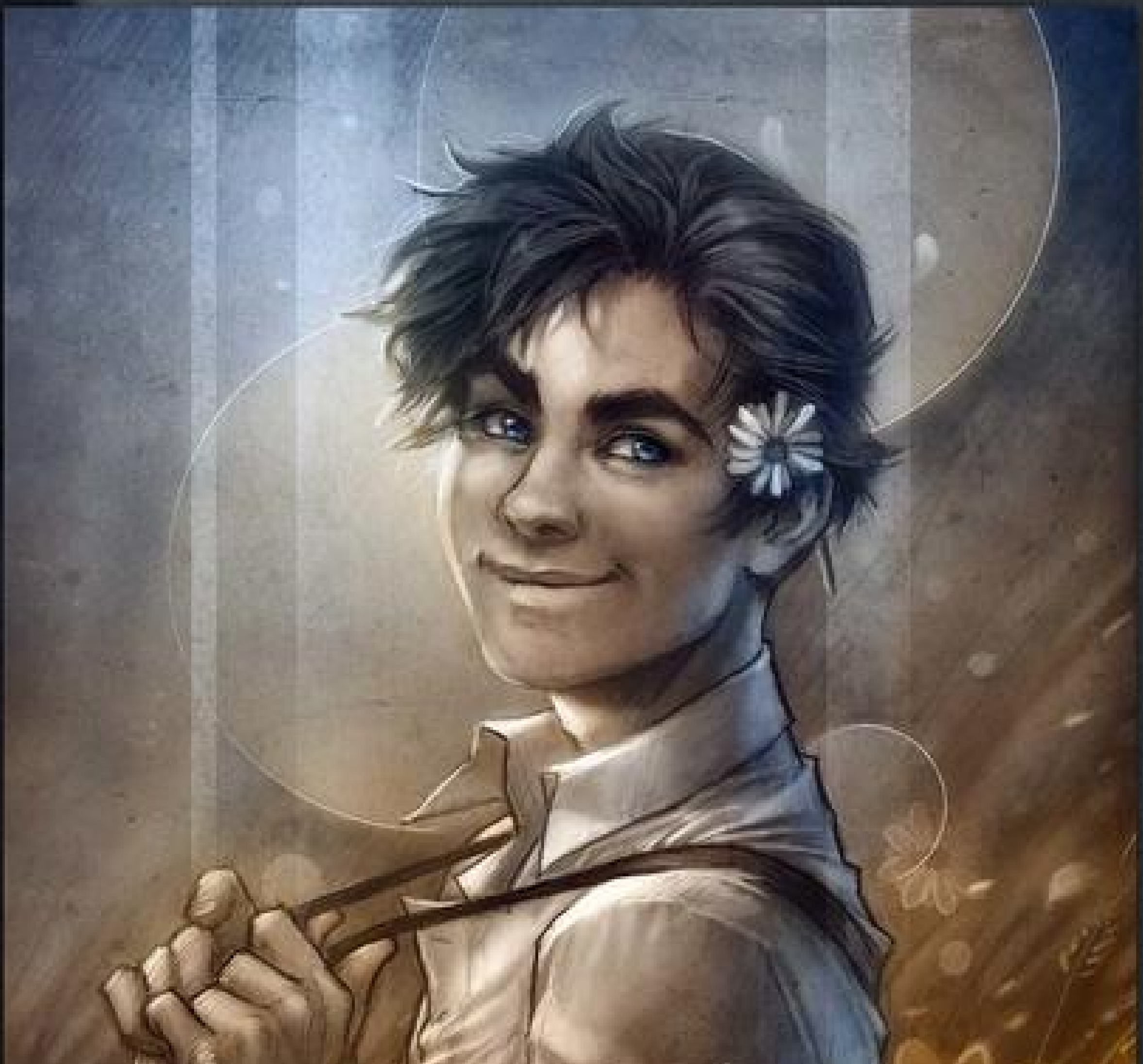
Memorial



Evergreen



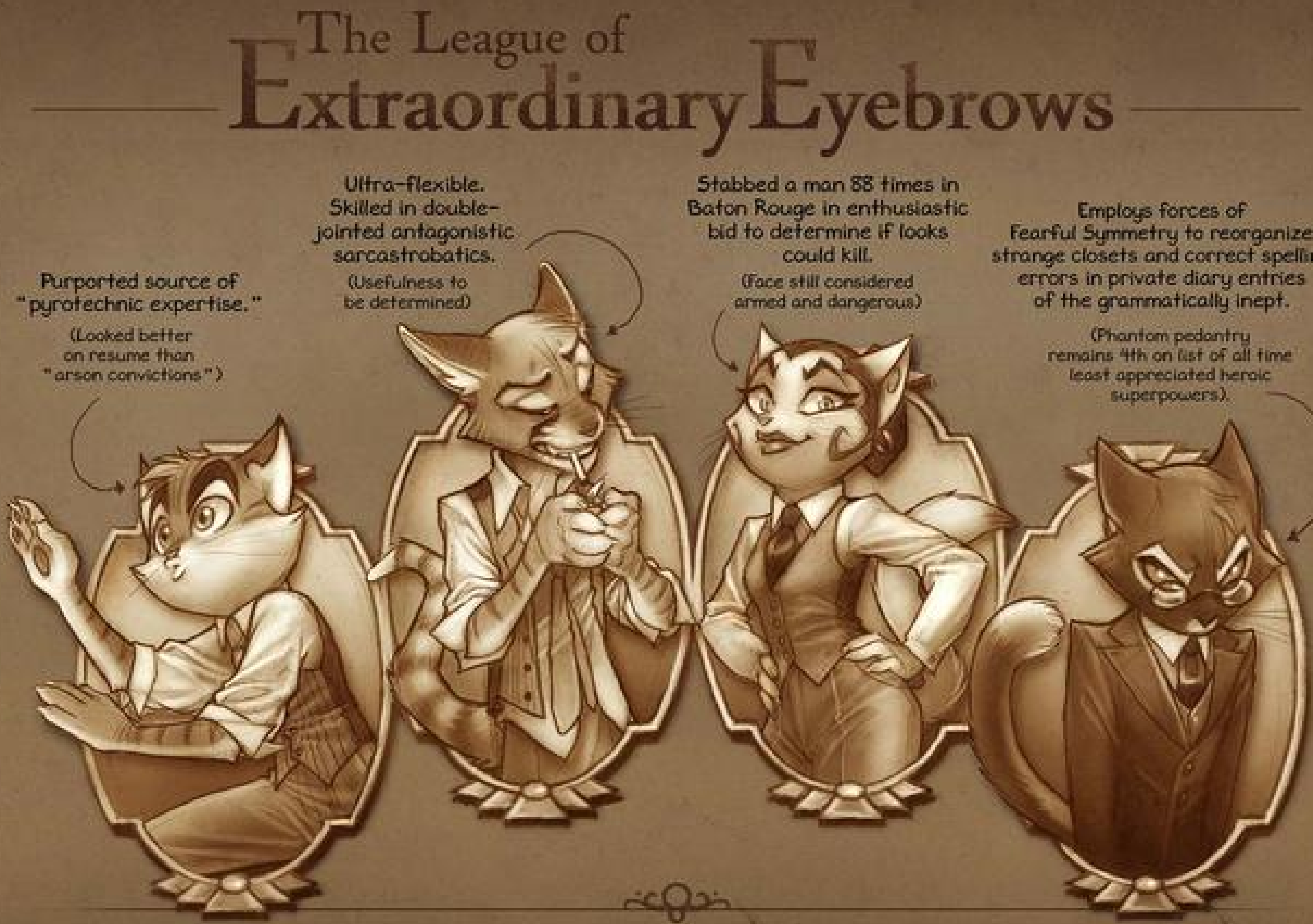
Glimmer-light



Sun Spot

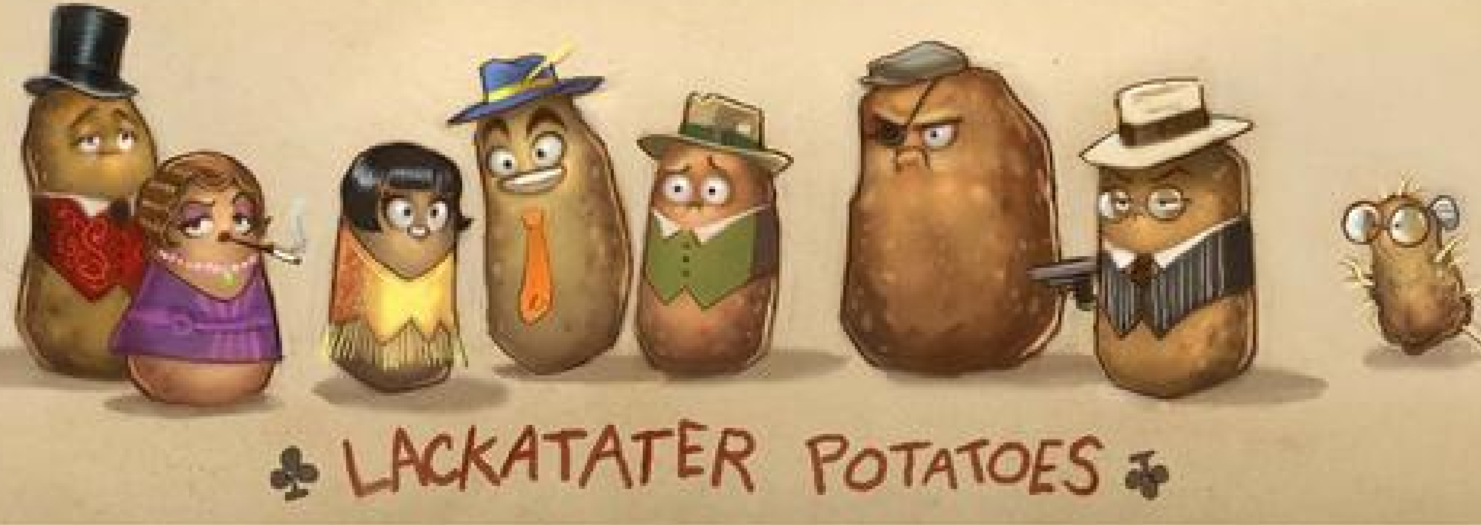
Q. "Are the eyebrows in Lackadaisy a big part of the character designs? Because Zib's, Mordecai's, Rocky's and Serafine's are pretty intense."

A. Yes. In fact, before Lackadaisy, they joined forces briefly in an ill-fated facial feature themed crime-fighting venture as:


The League of Extraordinary Eyebrows
Purported source of "pyrotechnic expertise." (Looked better on resume than "arson convictions")
Ultra-flexible. Skilled in double-jointed antagonistic sarcastrobatics. (Usefulness to be determined)
Stabbed a man 88 times in Baton Rouge in enthusiastic bid to determine if looks could kill. (Face still considered armed and dangerous)
Employs forces of Fearful Symmetry to reorganize strange closets and correct spelling errors in private diary entries of the grammatically inept. (Phantom pedantry remains 4th on list of all time least appreciated heroic superpowers).

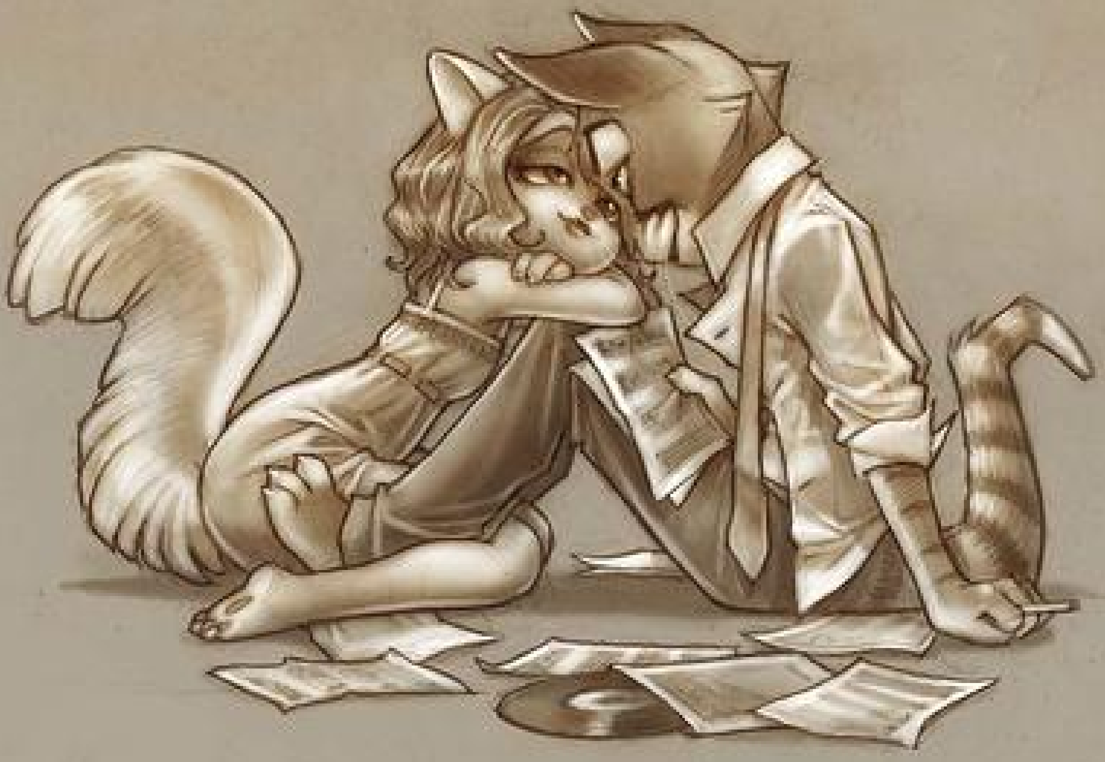
Q. "So, why did you choose cats? Can you try drawing the characters as something else?"

A.


LACKATATER POTATOES

Q. "Were Mitzi and Zib ever together in the past?"

A. The way they interact is intended to imply a certain familiarity – often bitter, sometimes affectionate. I've been asked this question so many times, though, I fear I've failed to communicate what I meant to communicate by way of comic. It's bad form to respond this way, but things weren't always platonic.



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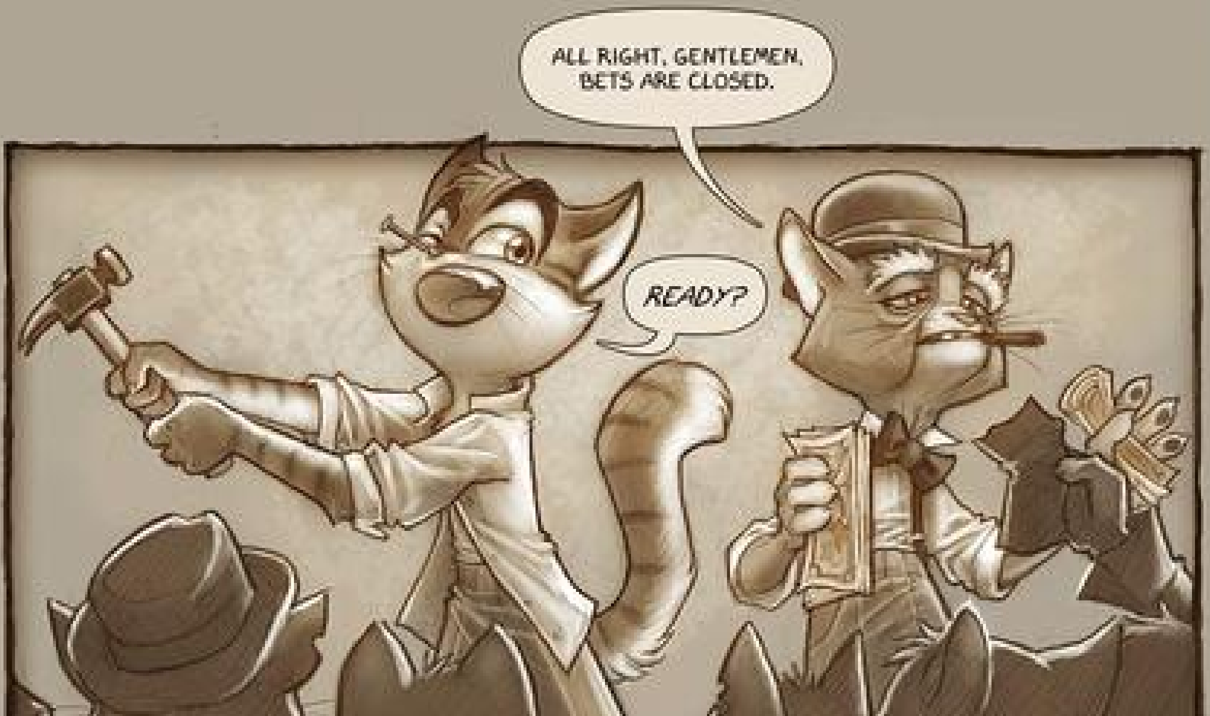
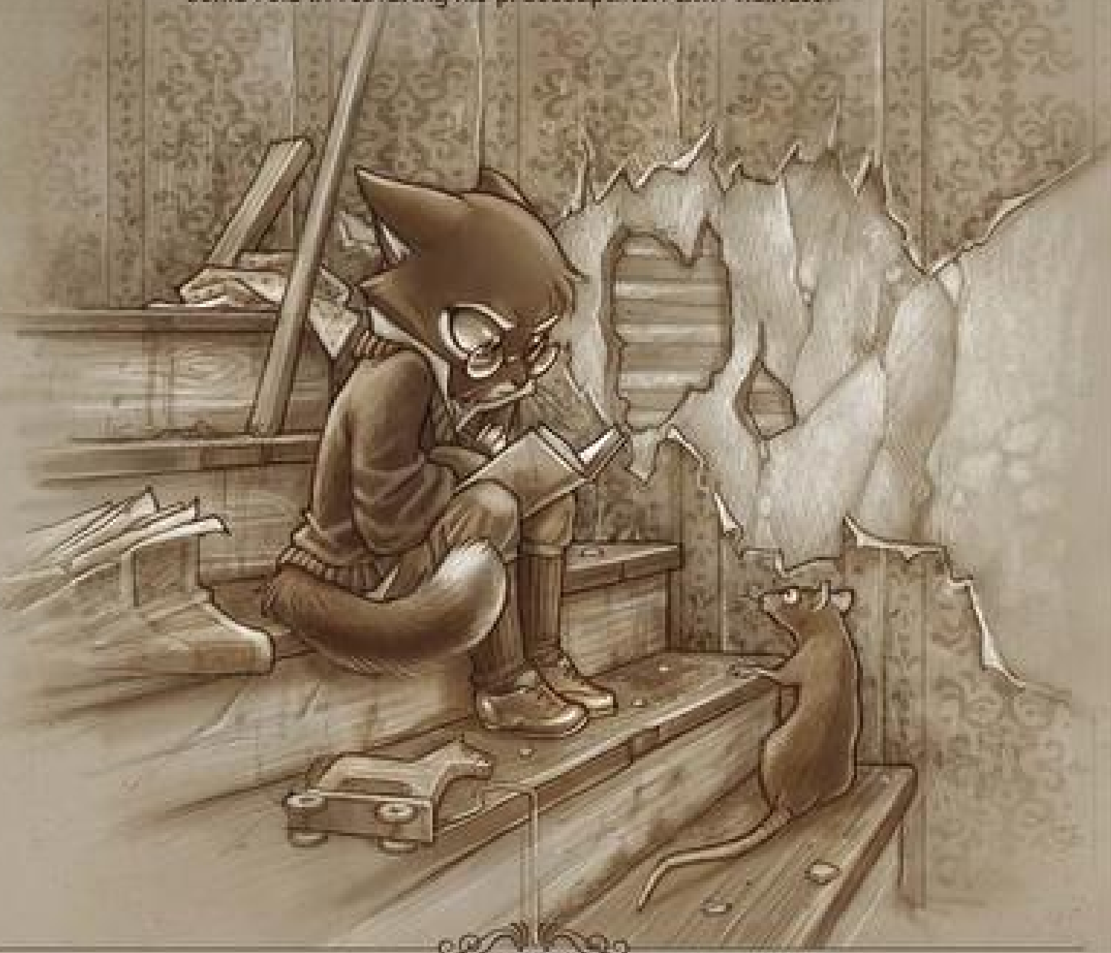
Q. "Is it strange that i'm infatuated with rocky? with a CAT!?"

A. That he's a cat is probably the least worrisome factor in this development.


ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN, BETS ARE CLOSED.
READY?

Q. "I'm wondering, did Mordecai ever present sociopathic traits as a kid? As well as for his "tidyness"– did he have that as a kid, and if not, what caused him to develop it?"

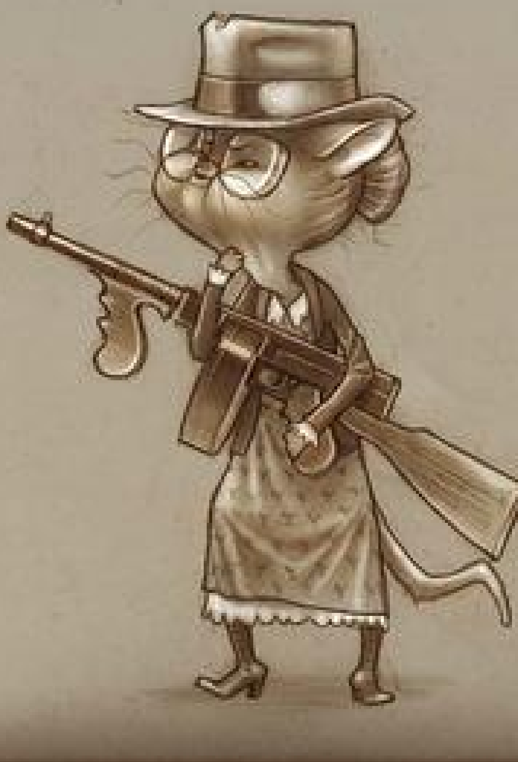
A. In pre-adolescence, he was nerdly, sullen and desperately in need of personal space, but not profoundly maladjusted. Tenement living conditions probably played some role in fostering his preoccupation with tidiness.



* * *

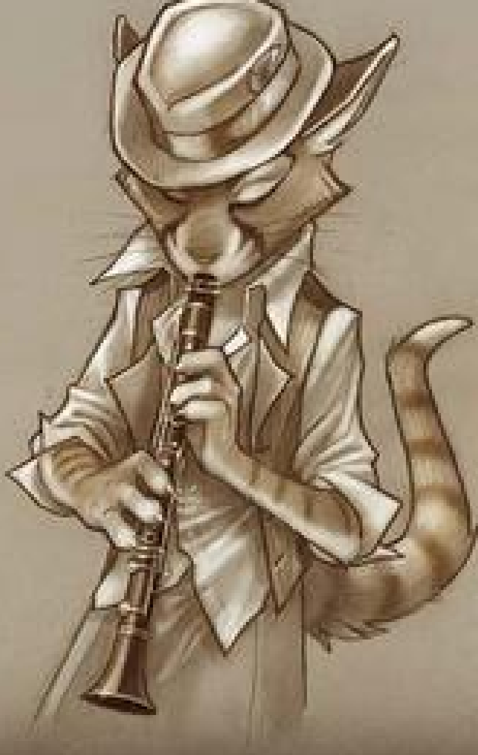
Q. "I must say that one of my favorite characters has to be Mrs. Bapka. I find her absolutely charming and hilarious. Though I am curious as to what language she is speaking?"

A. Aw, I'm glad! I wish I had all the time in the world so that I could also draw a comic about the incomprehensibly senile adventures of Mrs. Bapka. She speaks Slovak.



Q. "So I see that Zib plays the clarinet– why is he never depicted with one? There are certain aspiring jazz clarinetists out there dying to know."

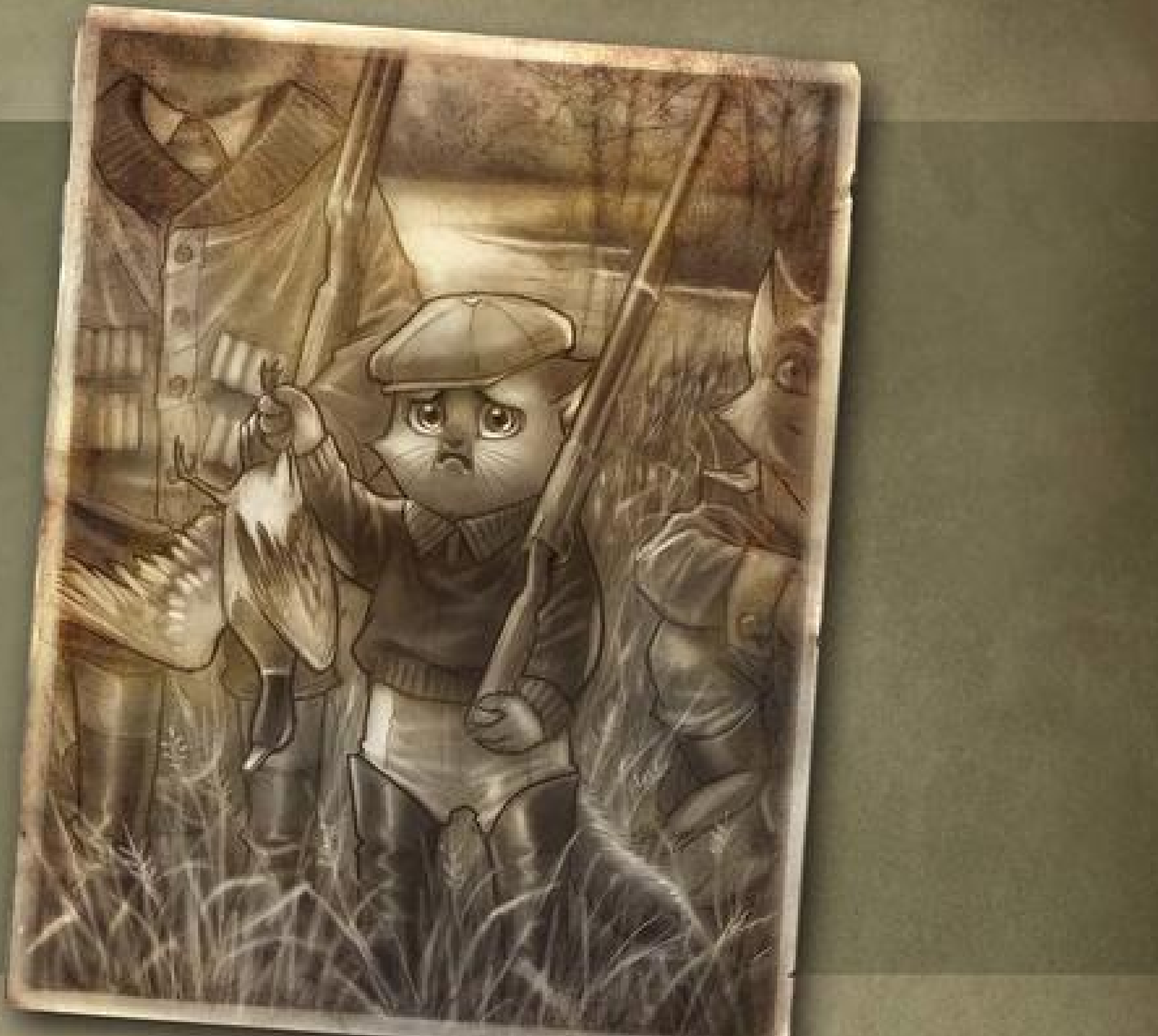
A. Vanity. He prefers being pictured with the sexyphone. (Though if you ask me, playing any sort of musical instrument is pretty sexy...with the possible exception of nose flutes, didgeridoos, and kazoos).

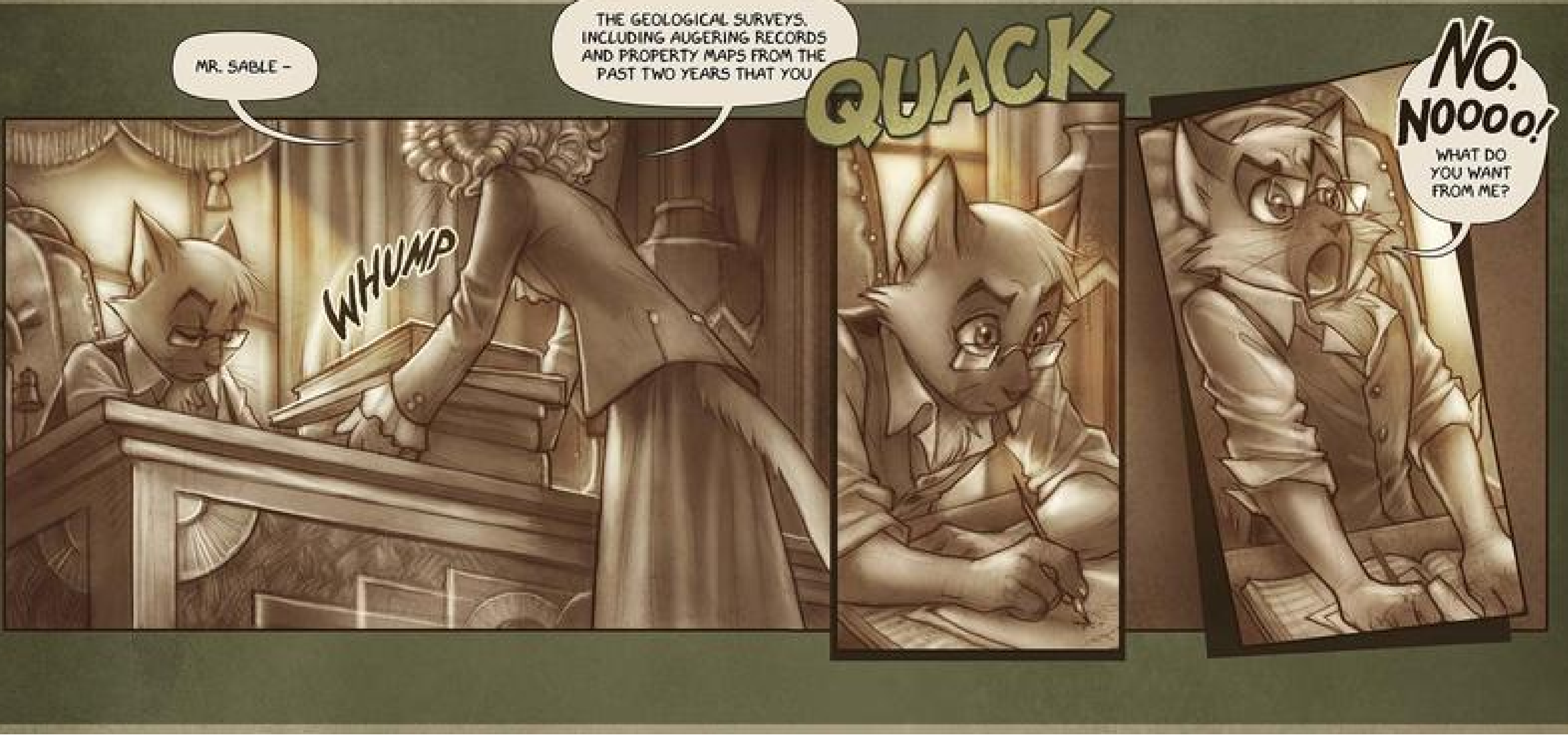


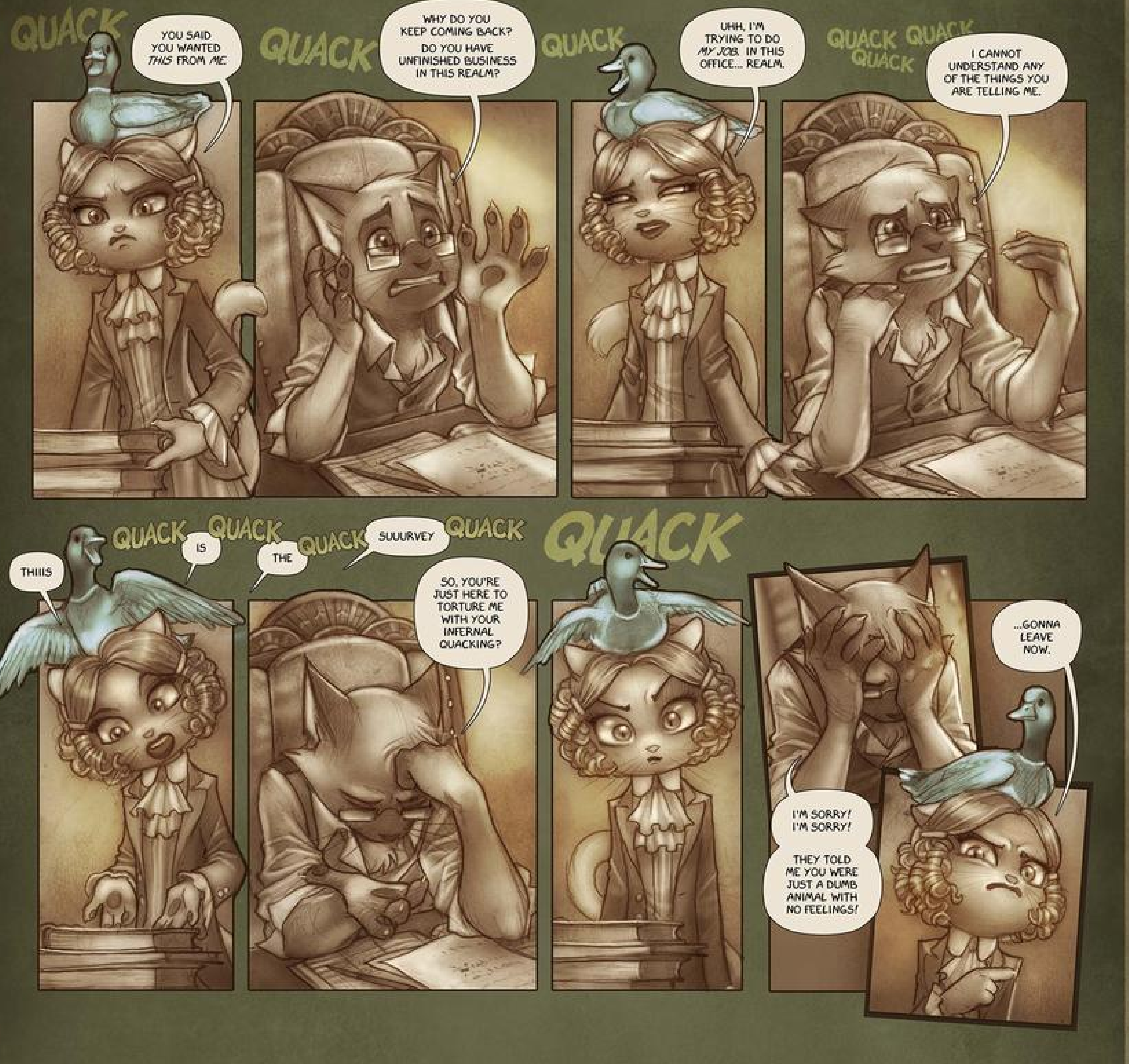
Q. "Is Wick a good shooter?"

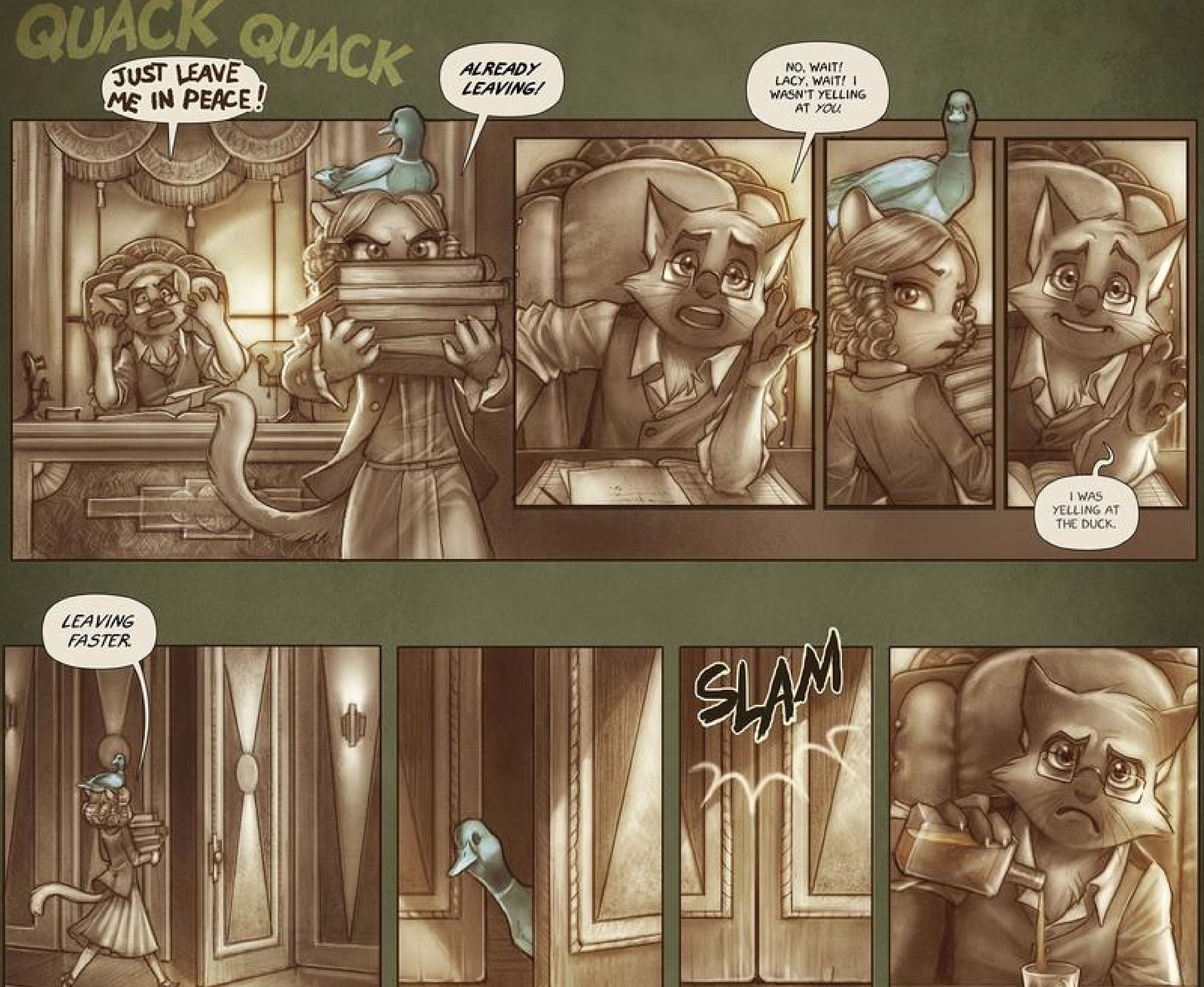
A. Well, he shot a duck once...

...but it's haunted him ever since.



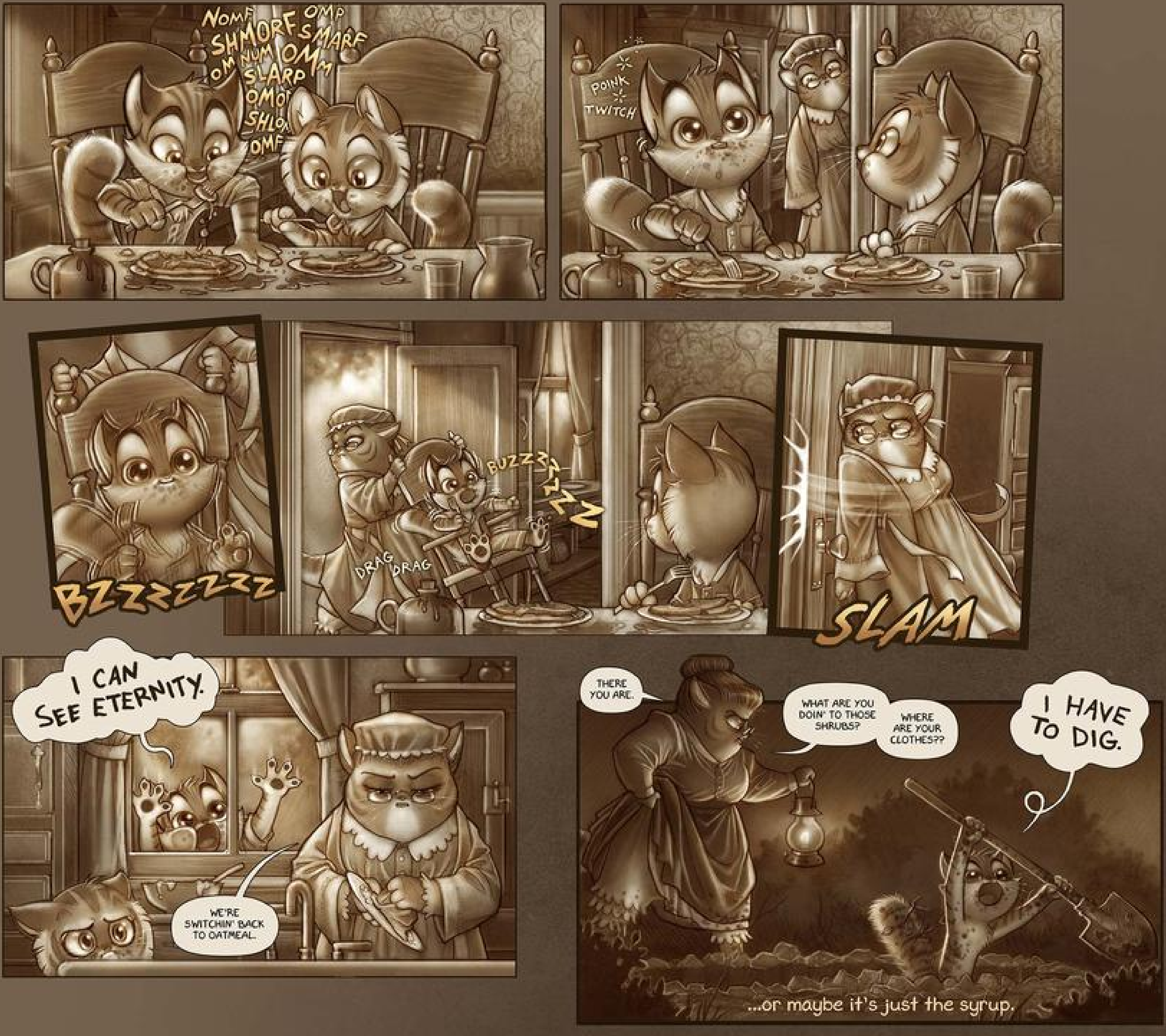

MR. SABLE –
THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS. INCLUDING AUGERING RECORDS AND PROPERTY MAPS FROM THE PAST TWO YEARS THAT YOU
WHUMP
QUACK
NO. NOOOO!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?


QUACK
YOU SAID YOU WANTED *THIS* FROM *ME*
QUACK
WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING BACK?
DO YOU HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN THIS REALM?
QUACK
UHH, I'M TRYING TO DO *MY JOB.* IN THIS OFFICE... REALM.
QUACK QUACK QUACK
I CANNOT UNDERSTAND ANY OF THE THINGS YOU ARE TELLING ME.
THIIIS
QUACK
IS
QUACK
THE
QUACK
SUUURVEY
QUACK
SO, YOU'RE JUST HERE TO TORTURE ME WITH YOUR INFERNAL QUACKING?
QUACK
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE JUST A DUMB ANIMAL WITH NO FEELINGS!
...GONNA LEAVE NOW.


QUACK QUACK
JUST LEAVE ME IN PEACE!
ALREADY LEAVING!
NO, WAIT! LACY, WAIT! I WASN'T YELLING AT *YOU*.
I WAS YELLING AT THE DUCK.
LEAVING FASTER.
SLAM

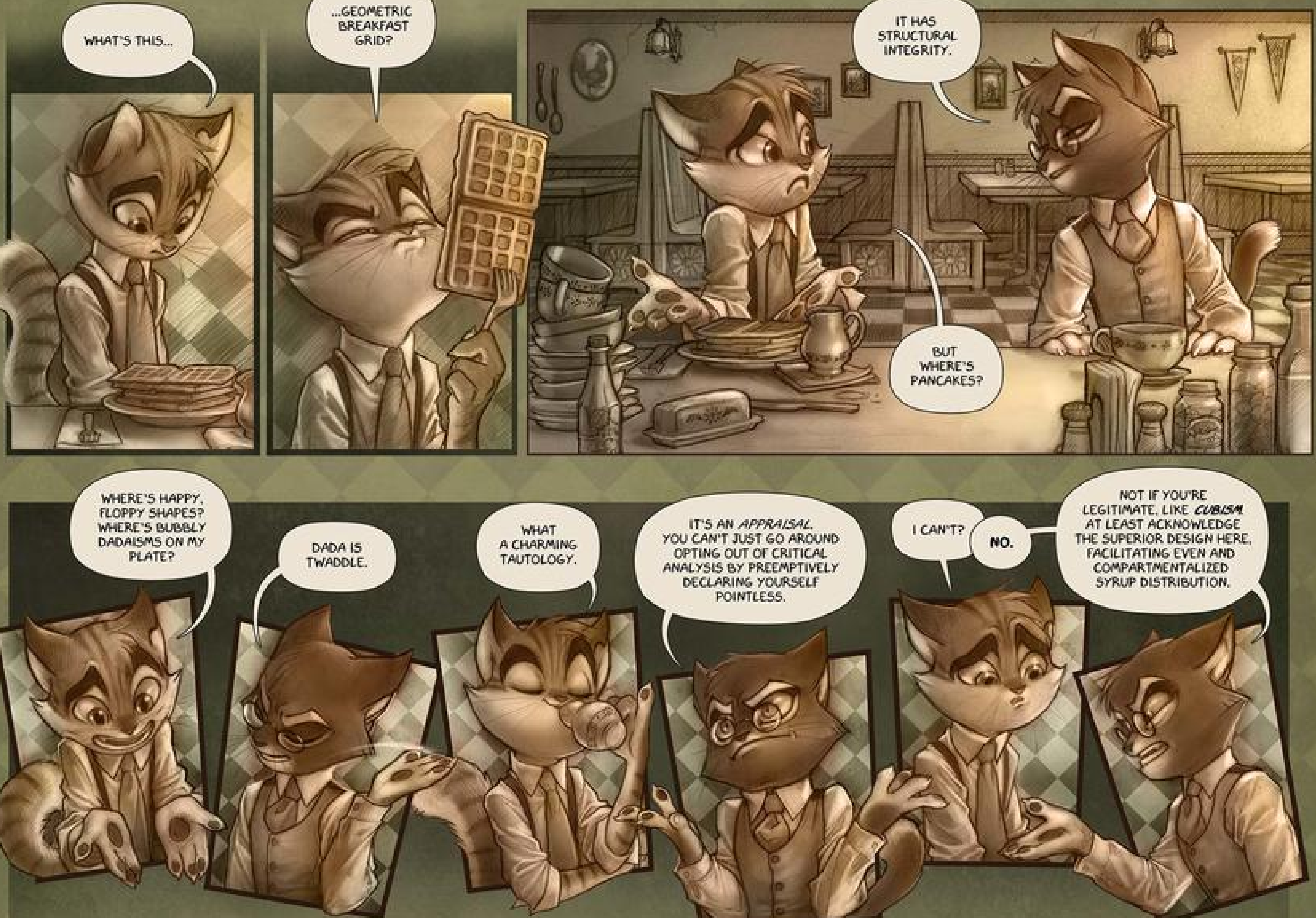
Q. "Why does Rocky like pancakes so much?"

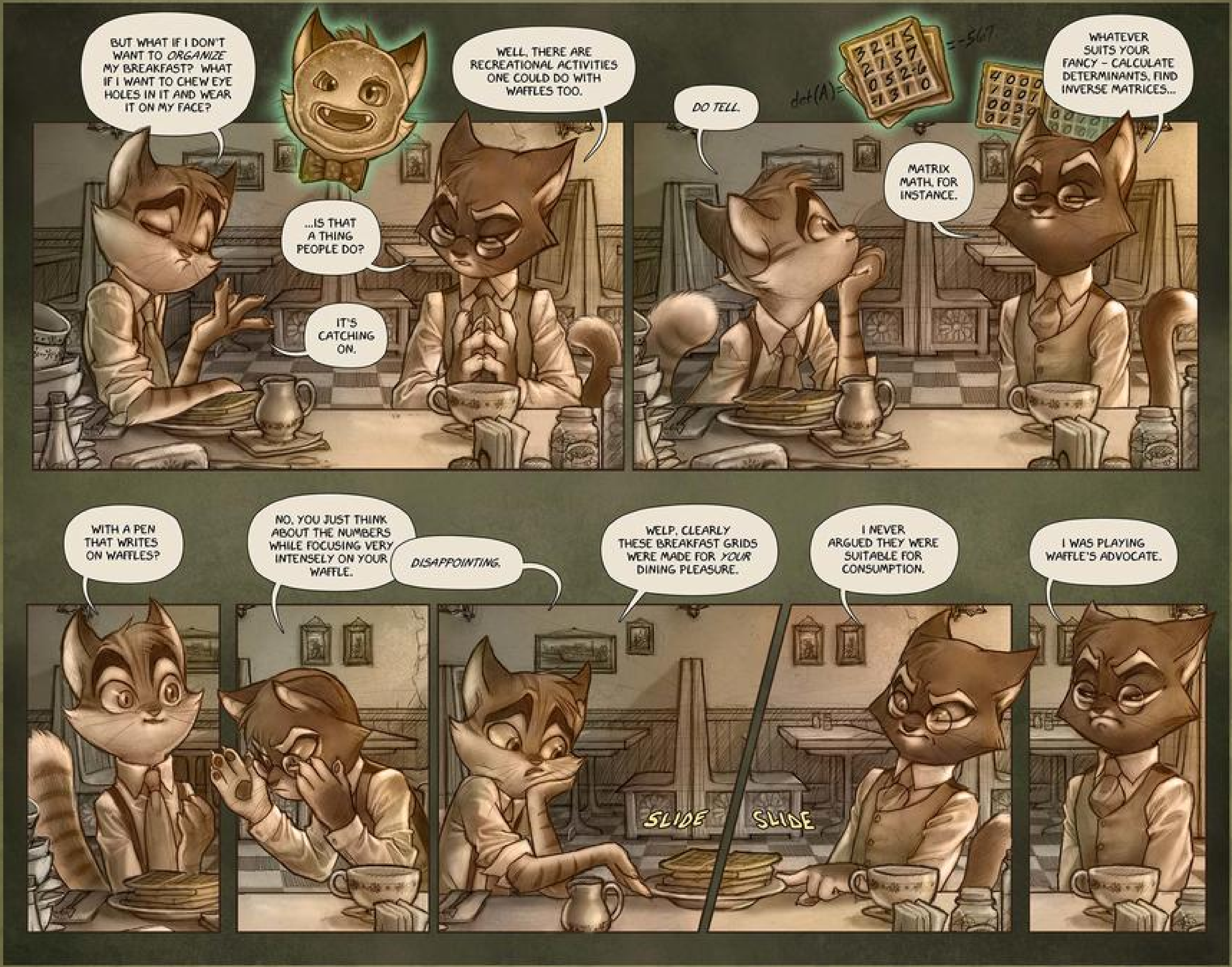
A. Some sort of genetic abnormality allows him to metabolize them rapidly and with extraordinary efficiency...

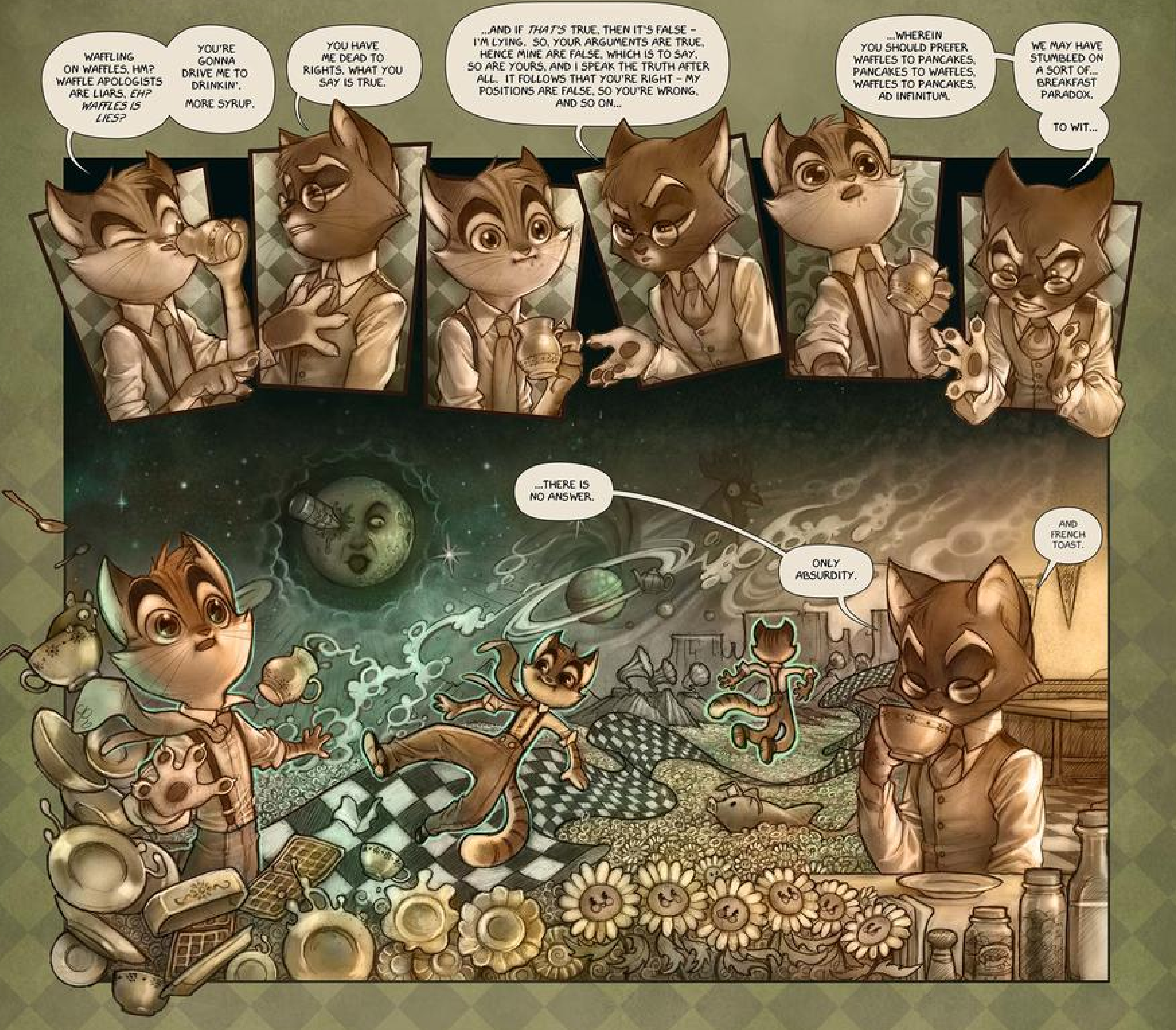

NOMF
OMP
SHMORF
SMARF
OM
NUM
OMM
SLARP
OMO
SHLOR
OMF
POINK
TWITCH
BZZZZZZZ
BUZZZZZZ
DRAG
DRAG
SLAM
I CAN SEE ETERNITY.
WE'RE SWITCHIN' BACK TO OATMEAL.
THERE YOU ARE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' TO THOSE SHRUBS?
WHERE ARE YOUR CLOTHES??
I HAVE TO DIG.
...or maybe it's just the syrup.

Q. “What would happen if Rocky tried waffles instead of pancakes?”

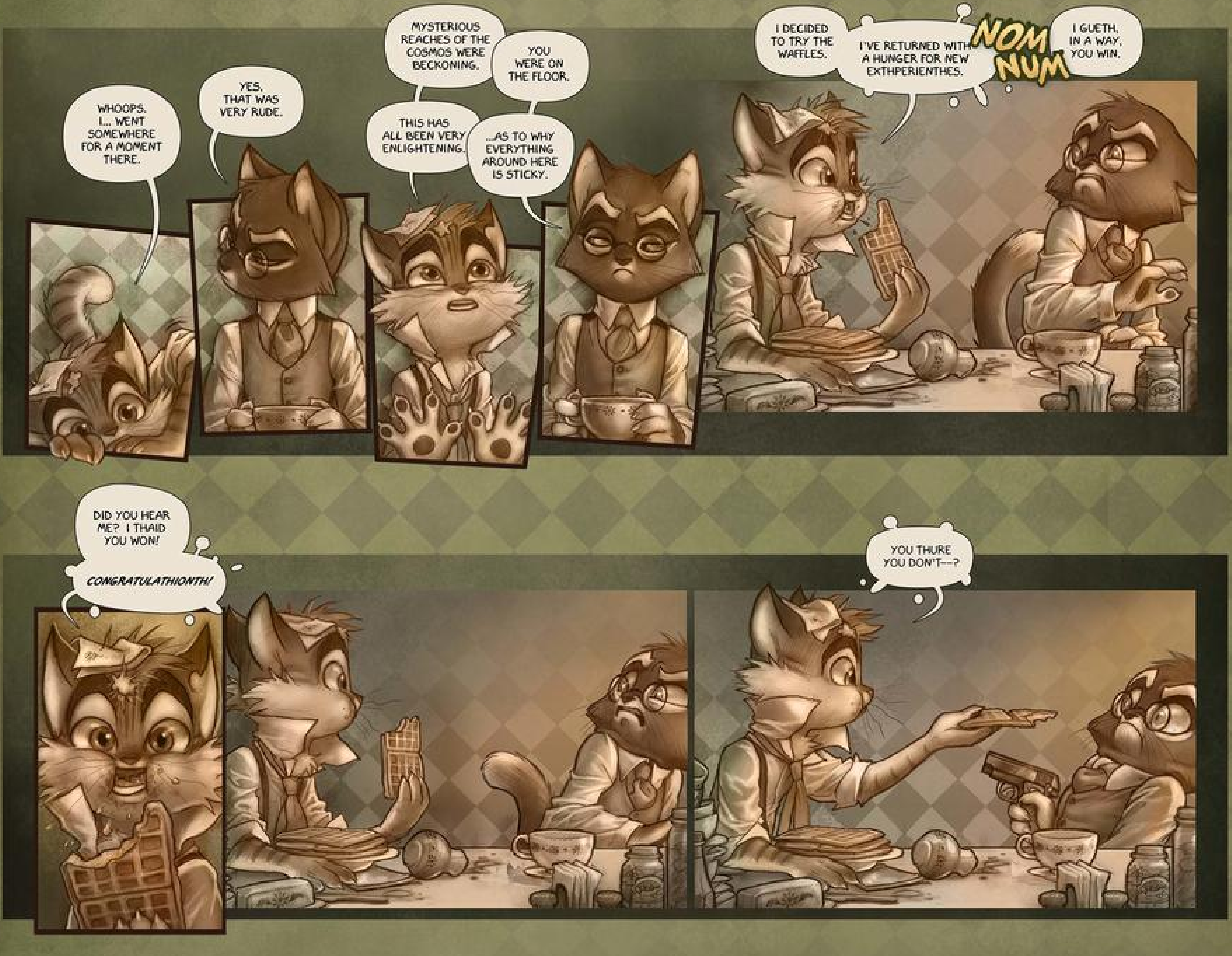
A.


WHAT'S THIS...
...GEOMETRIC BREAKFAST GRID?
IT HAS STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY.
BUT WHERE'S PANCAKES?
WHERE'S HAPPY, FLOPPY SHAPES? WHERE'S BUBBLY DADAISMS ON MY PLATE?
DADA IS TWADDLE.
WHAT A CHARMING TAUTOLOGY.
IT'S AN *APPRAISAL*. YOU CAN'T JUST GO AROUND OPTING OUT OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS BY PREEMPTIVELY DECLARING YOURSELF POINTLESS.
I CAN'T?
NO.
NOT IF YOU'RE LEGITIMATE, LIKE *CUBISM*. AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPERIOR DESIGN HERE, FACILITATING EVEN AND COMPARTMENTALIZED SYRUP DISTRIBUTION.


BUT WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO *ORGANIZE* MY BREAKFAST? WHAT IF I WANT TO CHEW EYE HOLES IN IT AND WEAR IT ON MY FACE?
...IS THAT A THING PEOPLE DO?
IT'S CATCHING ON.
WELL, THERE ARE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES ONE COULD DO WITH WAFFLES TOO.
DO TELL.
MATRIX MATH, FOR INSTANCE.
det(A)=
=-567
WHATEVER SUITS YOUR FANCY - CALCULATE DETERMINANTS, FIND INVERSE MATRICES...
WITH A PEN THAT WRITES ON WAFFLES?
NO, YOU JUST THINK ABOUT THE NUMBERS WHILE FOCUSING VERY INTENSELY ON YOUR WAFFLE.
DISAPPOINTING.
WELP, CLEARLY THESE BREAKFAST GRIDS WERE MADE FOR *YOUR* DINING PLEASURE.
SLIDE
SLIDE
I NEVER ARGUED THEY WERE SUITABLE FOR CONSUMPTION.
I WAS PLAYING WAFFLE'S ADVOCATE.

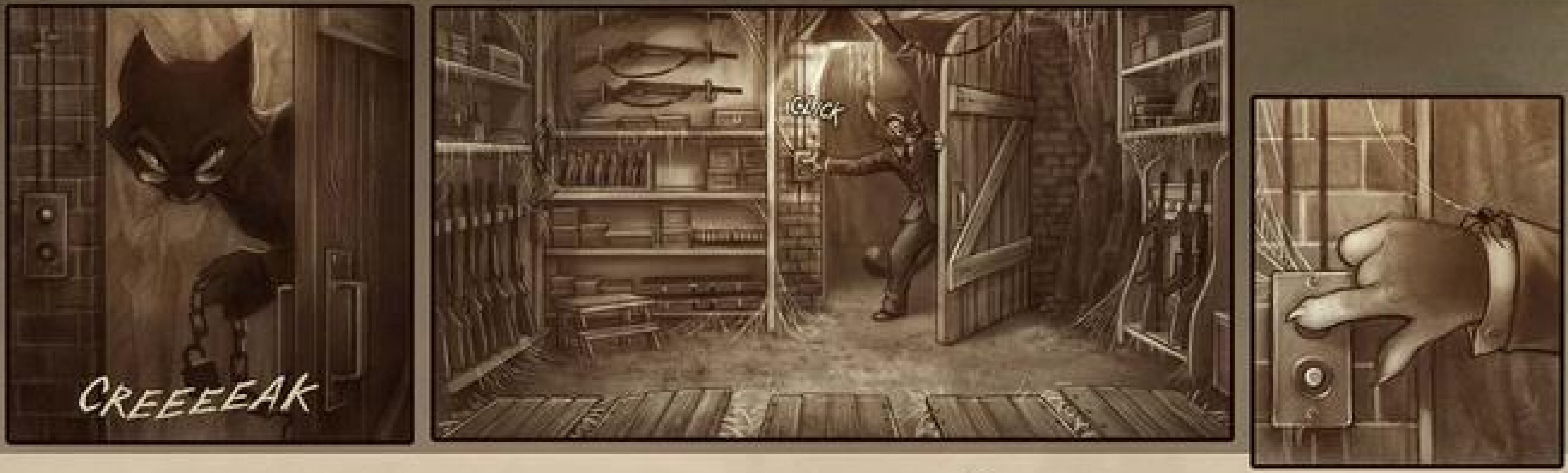

WAFFLING ON WAFFLES, HM? WAFFLE APOLOGISTS ARE LIARS, *EH? WAFFLES IS LIES?*
YOU'RE GONNA DRIVE ME TO DRINKIN'.
MORE SYRUP.
YOU HAVE ME DEAD TO RIGHTS. WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE.
...AND IF *THAT'S* TRUE, THEN IT'S FALSE – I'M LYING. SO, YOUR ARGUMENTS ARE TRUE, HENCE MINE ARE FALSE, WHICH IS TO SAY, SO ARE YOURS, AND I SPEAK THE TRUTH AFTER ALL. IT FOLLOWS THAT YOU'RE RIGHT – MY POSITIONS ARE FALSE, SO YOU'RE WRONG, AND SO ON...
...WHEREIN YOU SHOULD PREFER WAFFLES TO PANCAKES, PANCAKES TO WAFFLES, WAFFLES TO PANCAKES, AD INFINITUM.
WE MAY HAVE STUMBLED ON A SORT OF... BREAKFAST PARADOX.
TO WIT...
...THERE IS NO ANSWER.
ONLY ABSURDITY.
AND FRENCH TOAST.

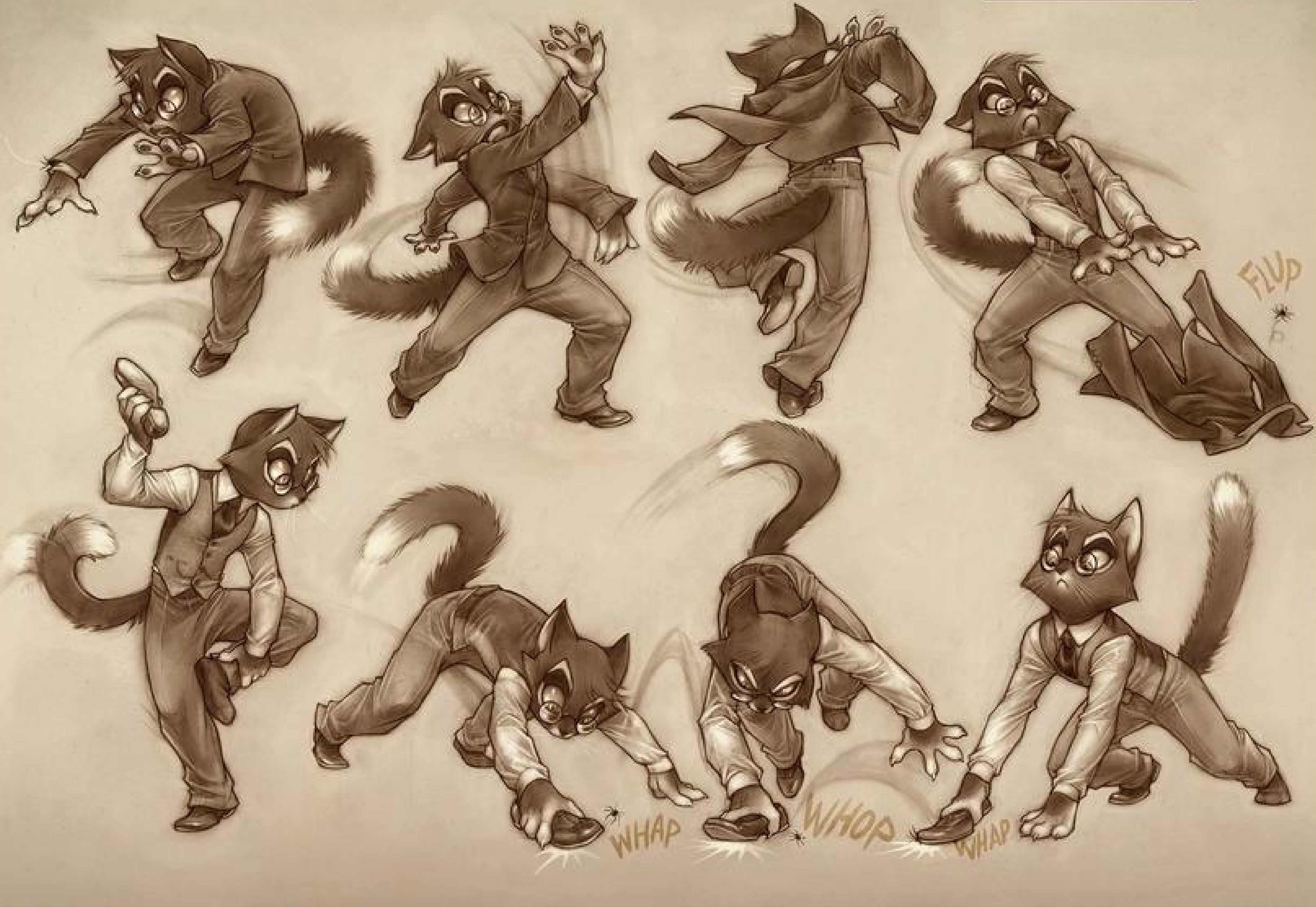
Epilogue

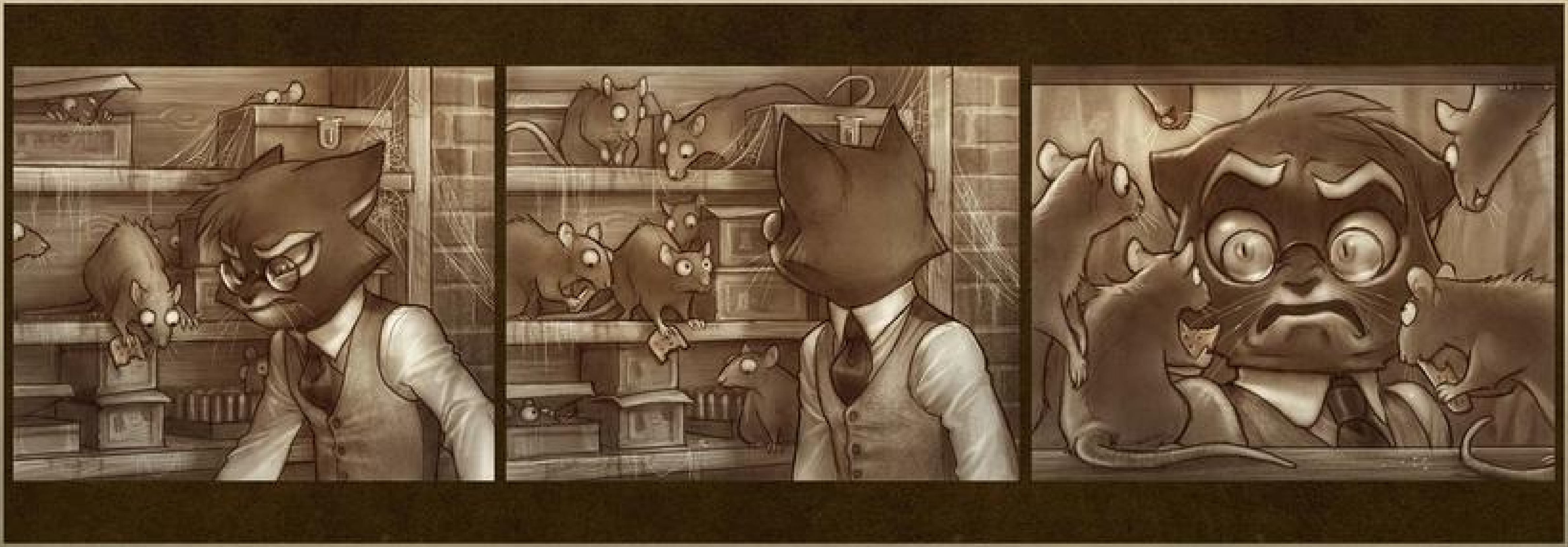

WHOOPS. I... WENT SOMEWHERE FOR A MOMENT THERE.
YES, THAT WAS VERY RUDE.
MYSTERIOUS REACHES OF THE COSMOS WERE BECKONING.
YOU WERE ON THE FLOOR.
THIS HAS ALL BEEN VERY ENLIGHTENING.
...AS TO WHY EVERYTHING AROUND HERE IS STICKY.
I DECIDED TO TRY THE WAFFLES.
I'VE RETURNED WITH A HUNGER FOR NEW EXTHPERIENTHES.
NOM NUM
I GUETH, IN A WAY, YOU WIN.
DID YOU HEAR ME? I THAID YOU WON!
CONGRATULATHIONTH!
YOU THURE YOU DON'T--?

Q. "I keep wondering about Mordecai's motives for cleaning up after he's robbed the Lackadaisy of their firearms. Was that just due to his tidy nature, or was there some other motivation behind it?"

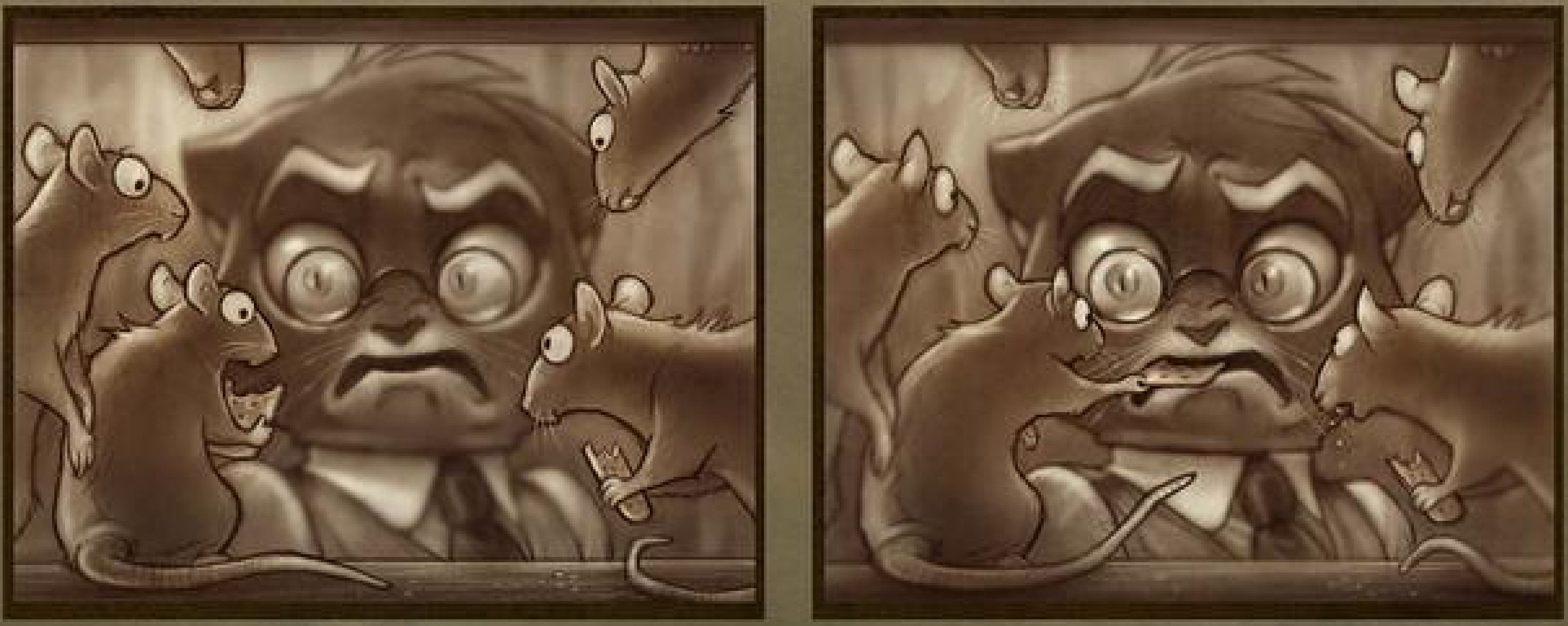
A. As a professional, discretion is important...


CREEEEAK
CLICK


FLUP
WHAP
WHOP
WHAP

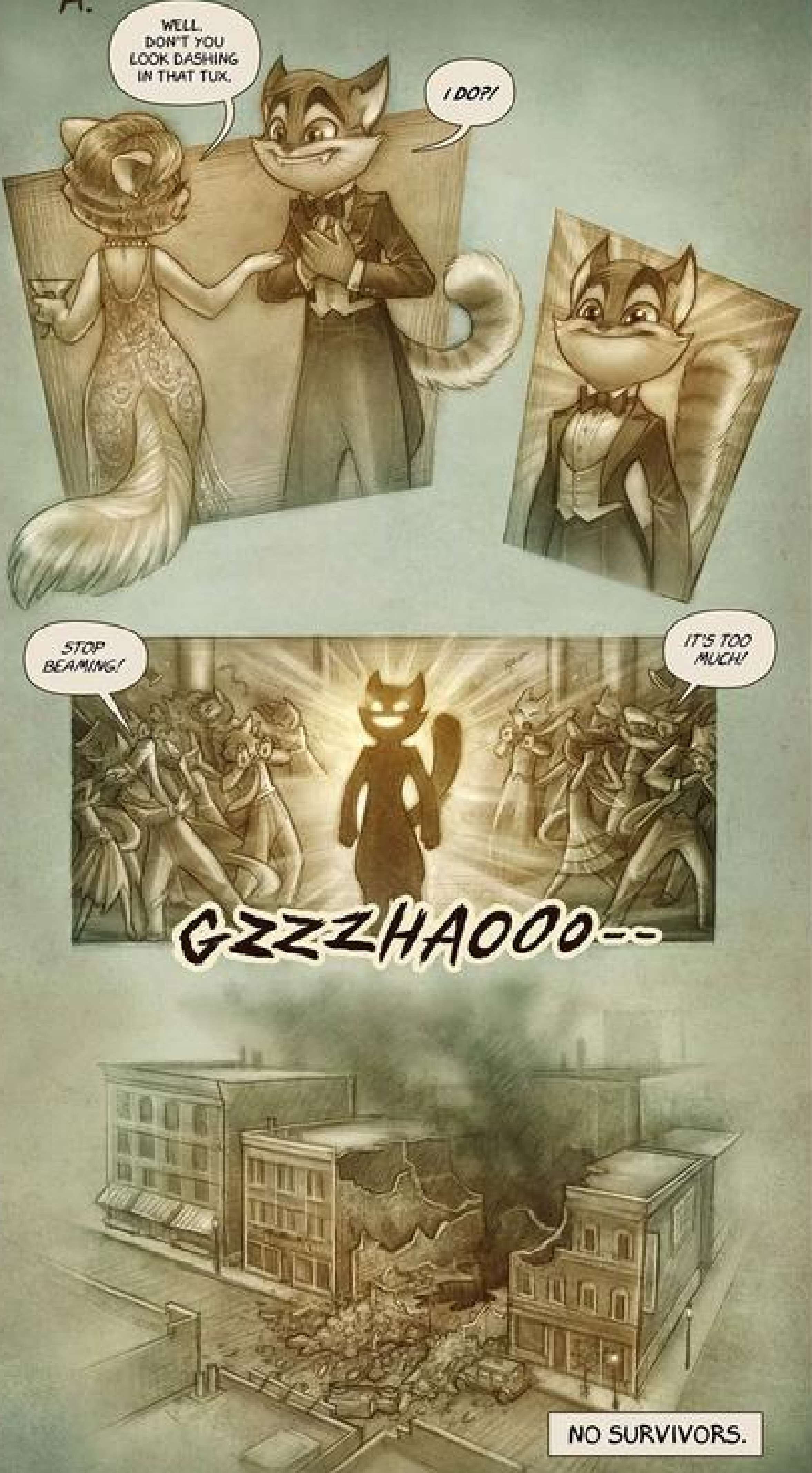


That is, uhh, he doesn't want to talk about it.



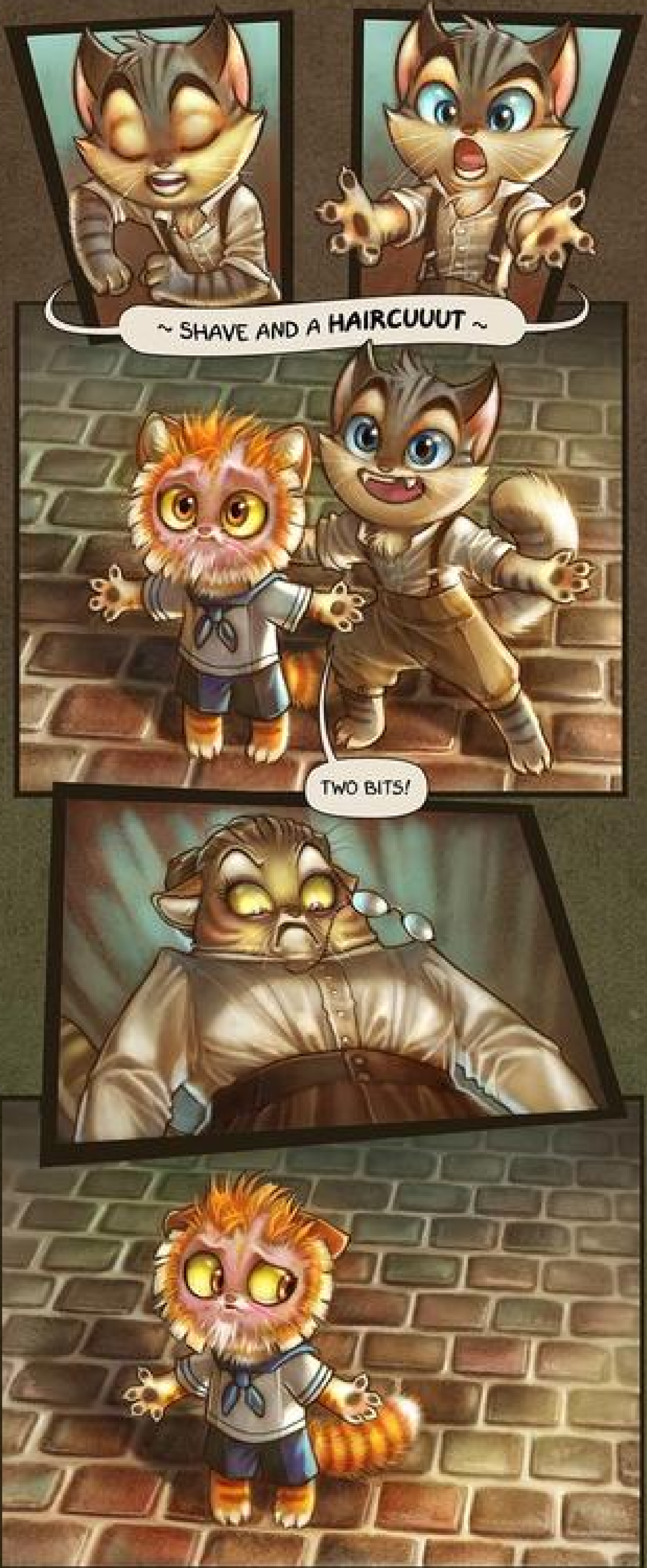
Q. "What if Mitzi gave Rocky a compliment?"

A.


WELL, DON'T YOU LOOK DASHING IN THAT TUX.
I DO?!
STOP BEAMING!
IT'S TOO MUCH!
GZZZHAOOO--
NO SURVIVORS.

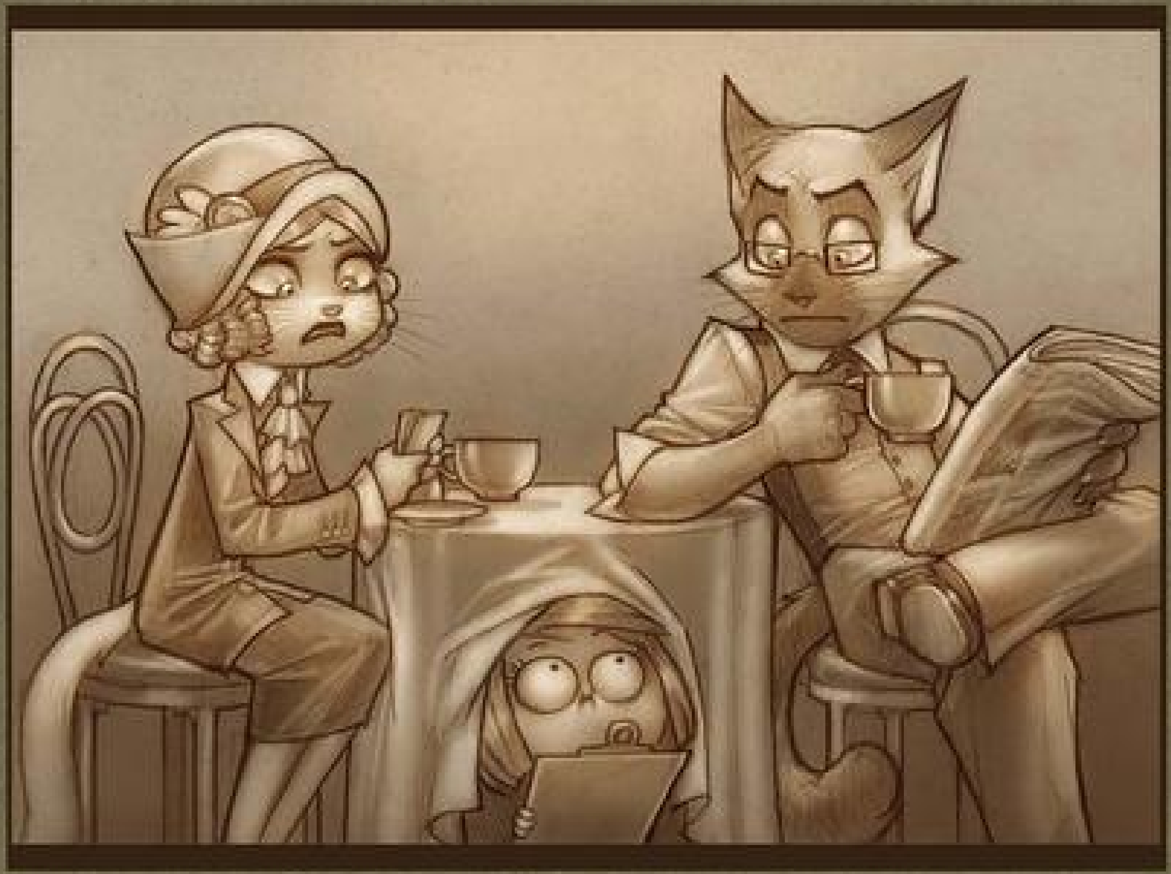
Q. "What does Freckle look like with a shaved face?"

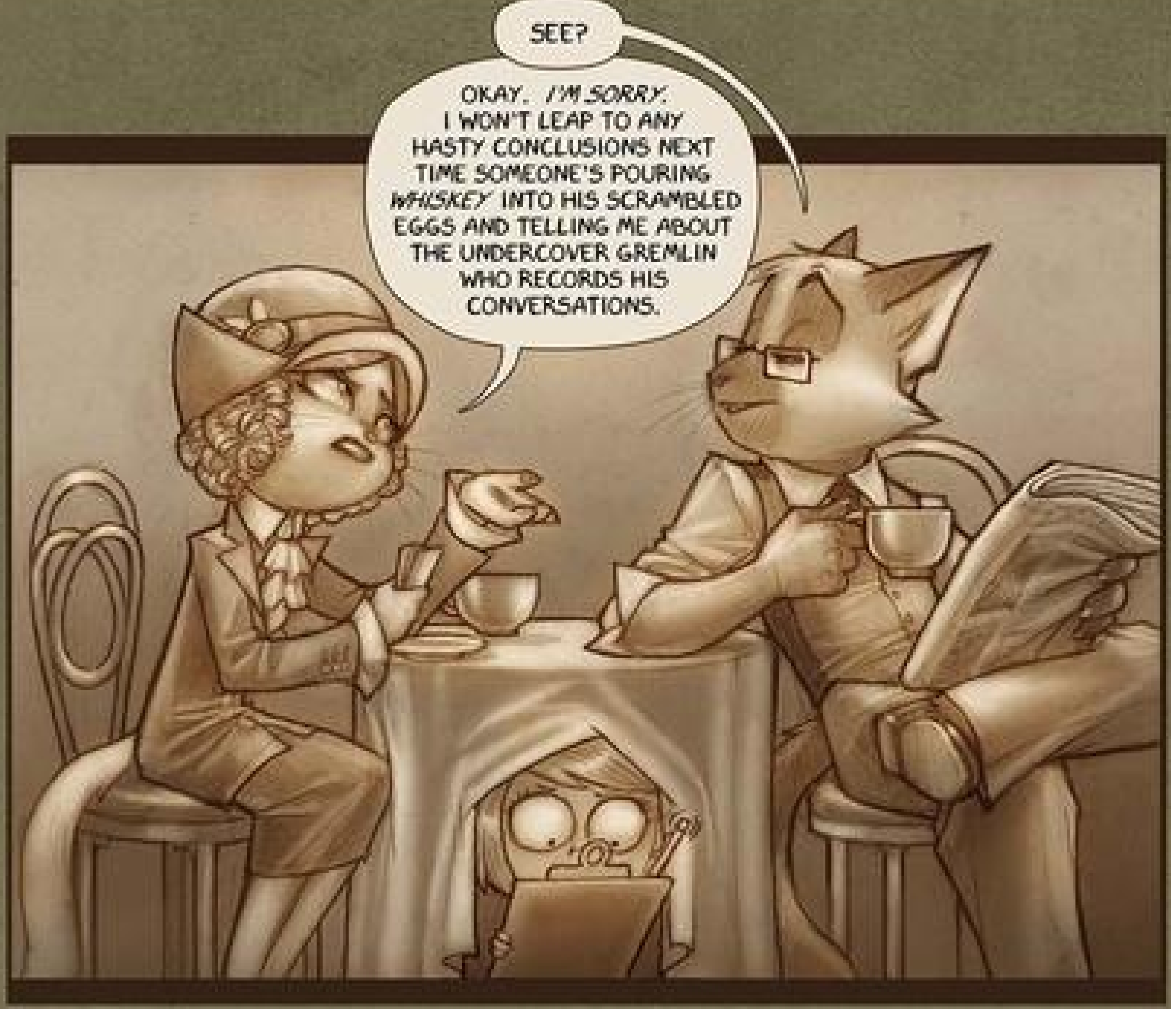
A.


~ SHAVE AND A HAIRCUUUT ~
TWO BITS!

Q. "Do you have long conversations with your characters in your head sometimes?"

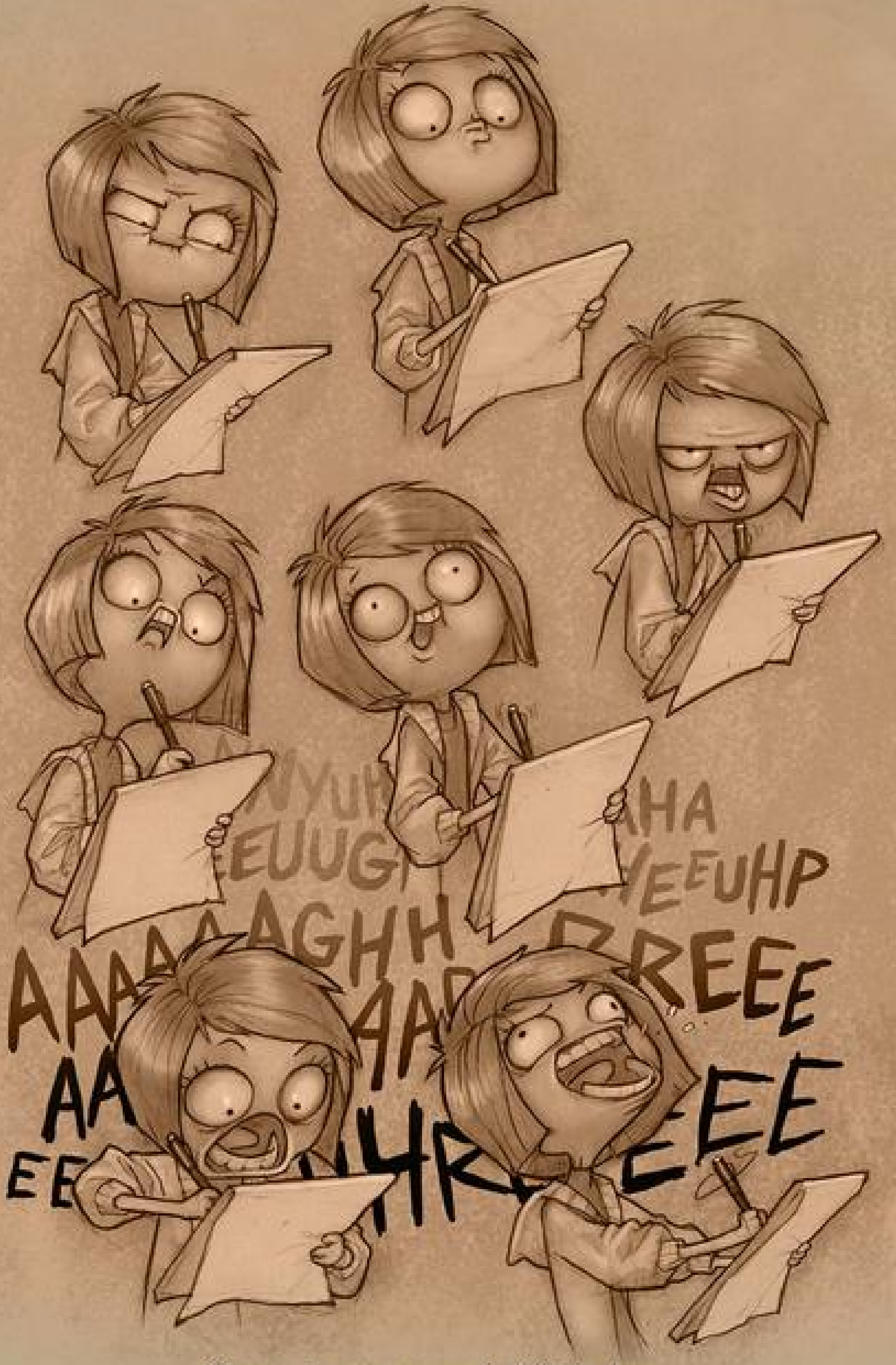
A. Nah. I just eavesdrop on their conversations.




SEE?
OKAY. *I'M SORRY.* I WON'T LEAP TO ANY HASTY CONCLUSIONS NEXT TIME SOMEONE'S POURING *WHISKEY* INTO HIS SCRAMBLED EGGS AND TELLING ME ABOUT THE UNDERCOVER GREMLIN WHO RECORDS HIS CONVERSATIONS.

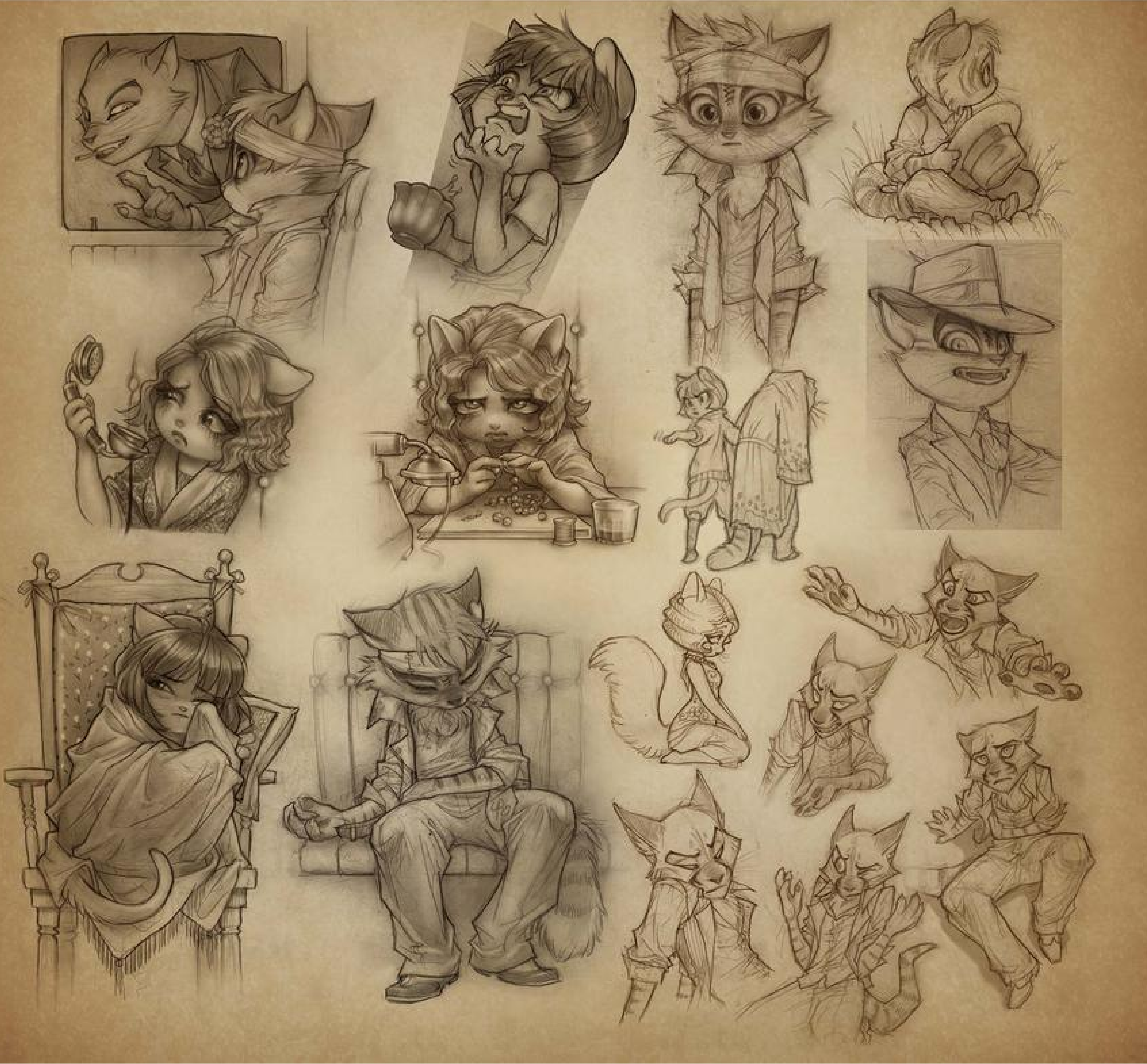
Q. "Dear Tracy. Do you look in a mirror when you do extreme expressions? Sorta like the artists at Disney?"

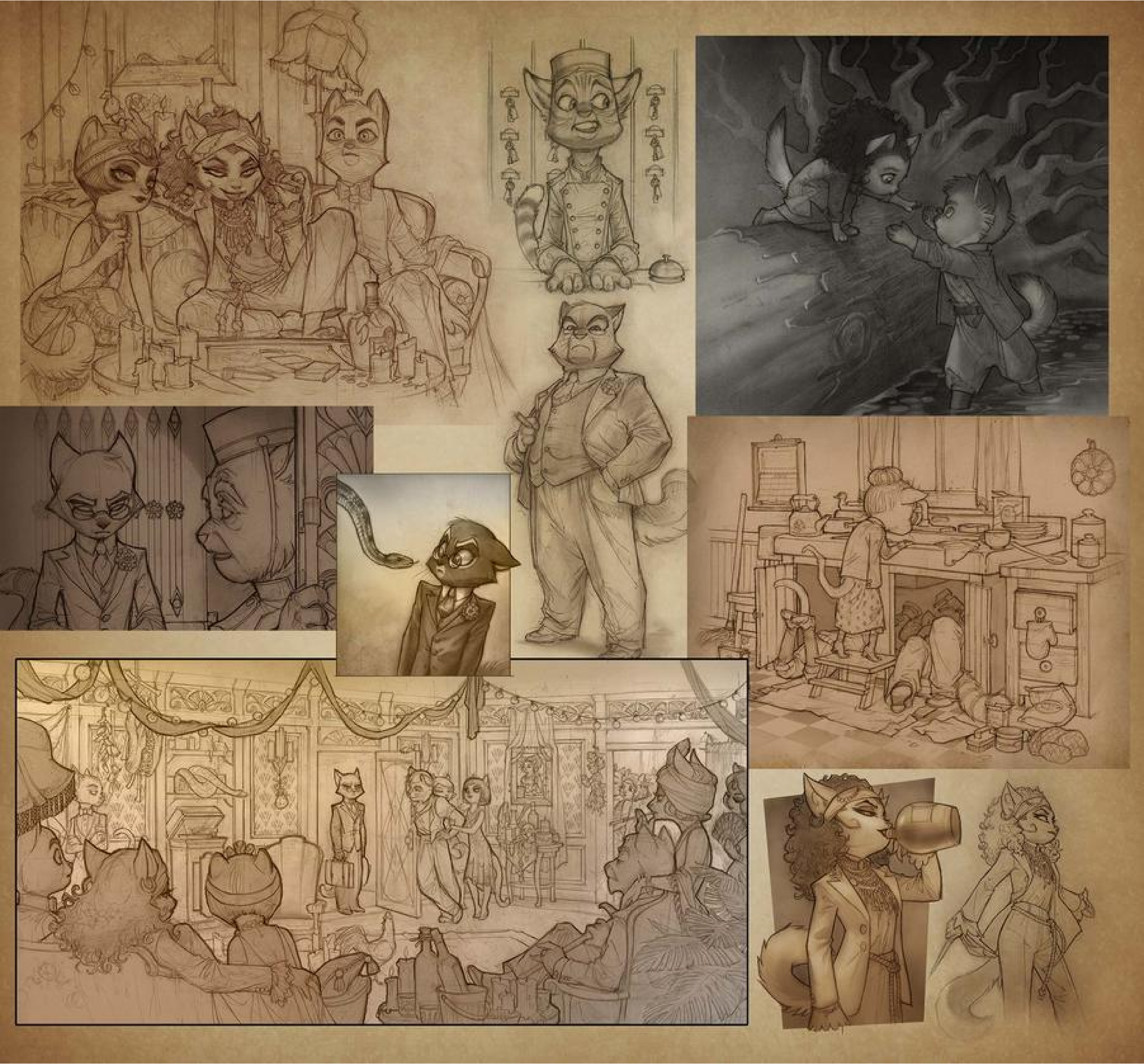
A. Mugging in the mirror has its uses. So does observing expressions other people make on a more natural basis. Making the expression you're drawing while you're drawing it is vital, though. I don't know why. It just is.


NYUH
EUUGH
AAAAAGHH
AHA
YEEUHP
BREEEE
AA
AA
EE
HR
EEEE

Throw in some sound effects too.
It's like acting for shut-ins.

LACKADAISY : DEVELOPMENT

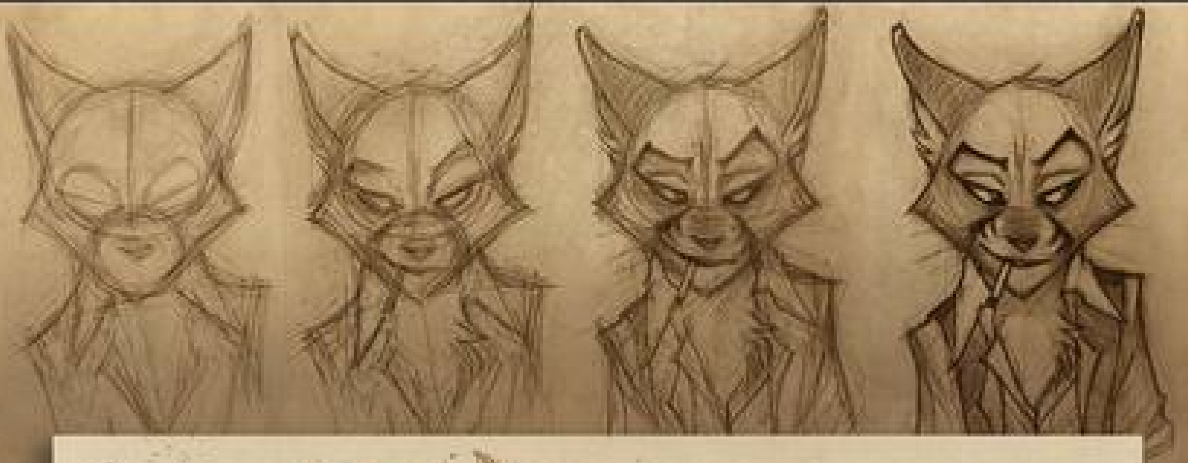


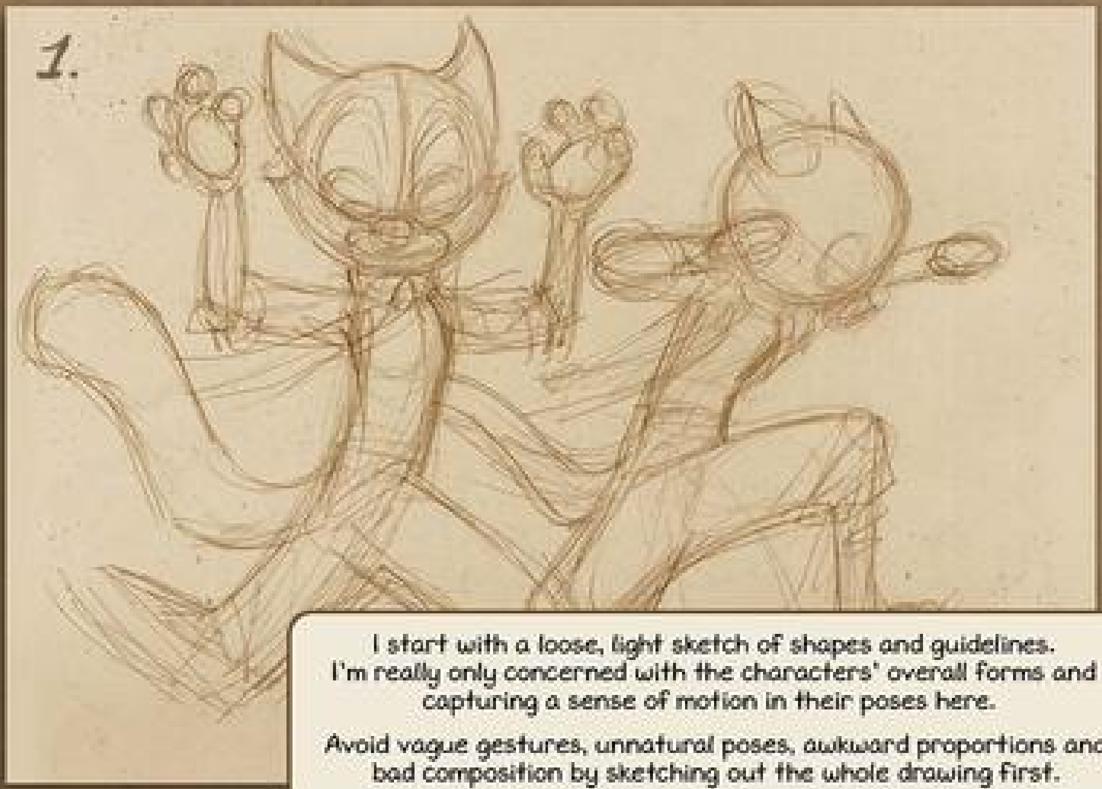


Q. "Do you have a very very rough sketch of how you start a drawing anywhere please? Like, circle shapes, triangles and building the character on top? I'd love to try and develop my own style but could do with some pointers from a person who knows how to draw extremely cute things."

A. The idea is to work from the general form toward the details, beginning with a map of basic shapes and guides.

To clarify, here's a wordier version of events featuring some idiots running through a cornfield.

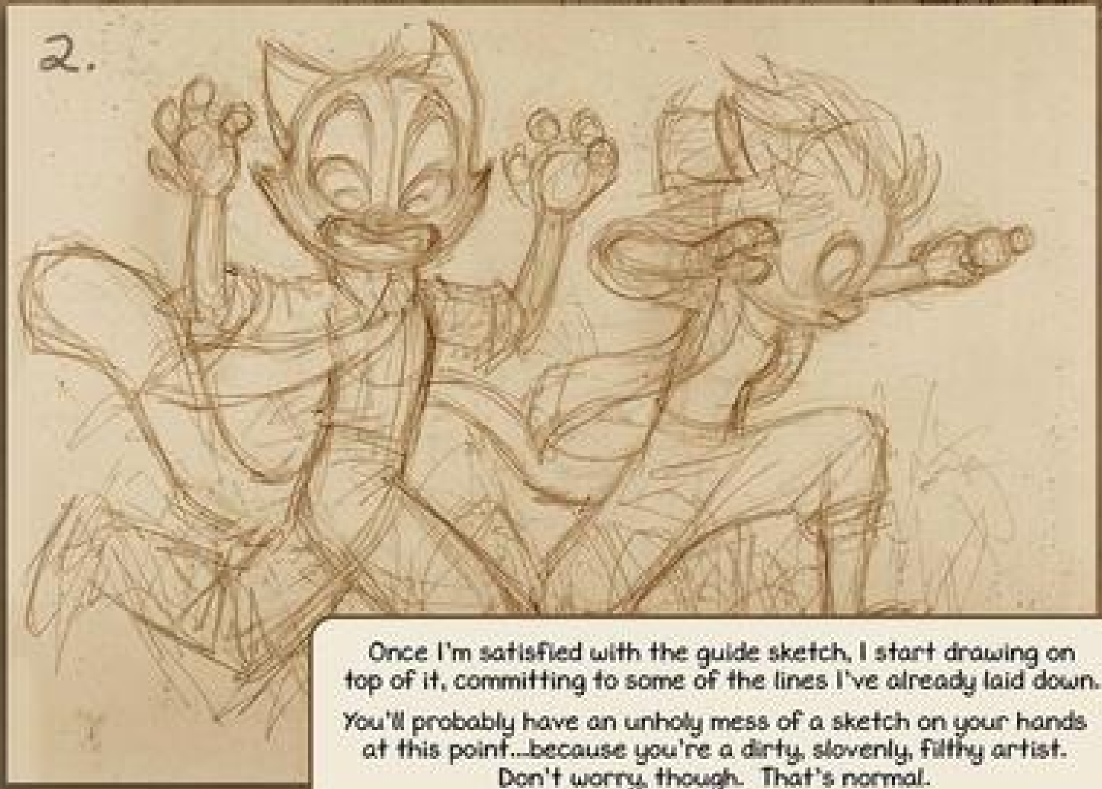




1.

I start with a loose, light sketch of shapes and guidelines. I'm really only concerned with the characters' overall forms and capturing a sense of motion in their poses here.

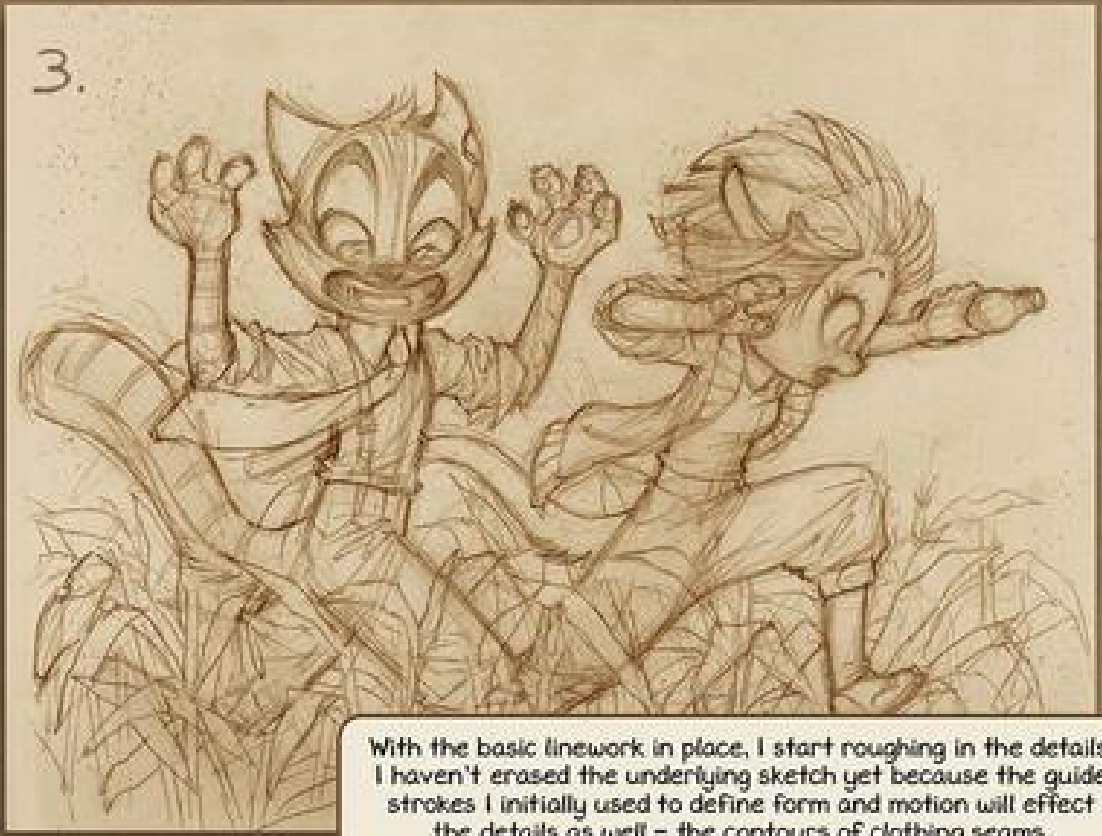
Avoid vague gestures, unnatural poses, awkward proportions and bad composition by sketching out the whole drawing first.



2.

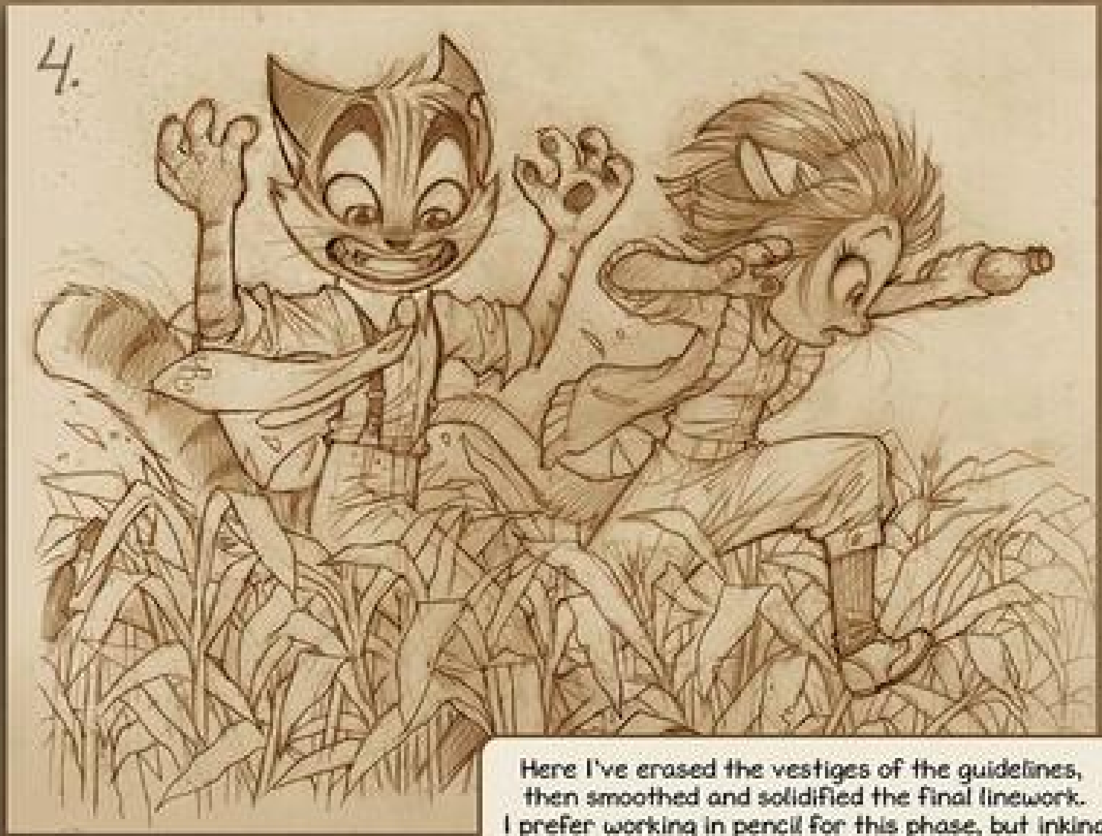
Once I'm satisfied with the guide sketch, I start drawing on top of it, committing to some of the lines I've already laid down.

You'll probably have an unholy mess of a sketch on your hands at this point...because you're a dirty, slovenly, filthy artist. Don't worry, though. That's normal.



3.

With the basic linework in place, I start roughing in the details. I haven't erased the underlying sketch yet because the guide strokes I initially used to define form and motion will effect the details as well – the contours of clothing seams, the flow of fabric wrinkles, where hair and fur tufts attach to the underlying figure, and so forth.

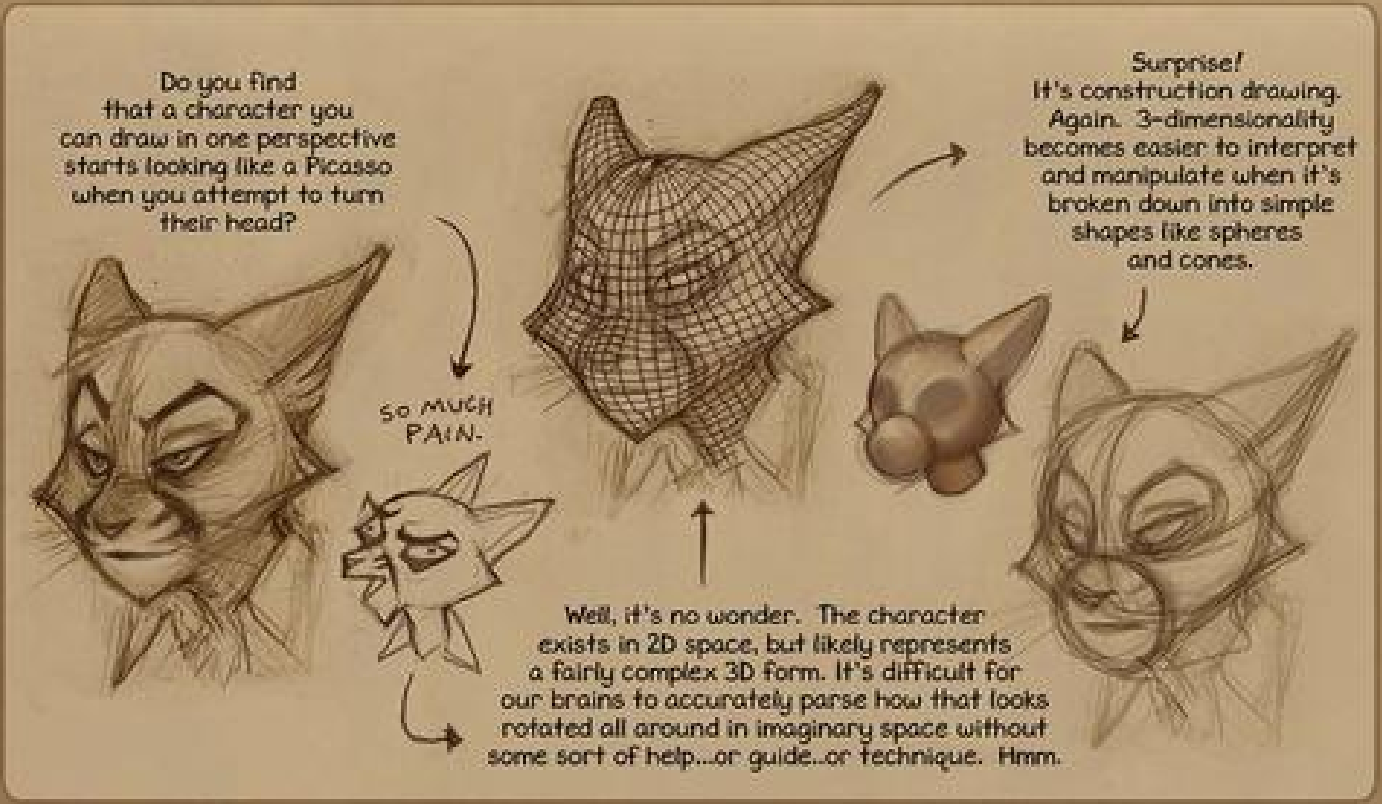


4.

Here I've erased the vestiges of the guidelines, then smoothed and solidified the final linework. I prefer working in pencil for this phase, but inking the drawing and then erasing all of the pencil work is another common way to go about it.

Q. "Here's my question: I tend to have silent tantrums when I try to draw a character more than one time, because they always end up looking different. How on earth do you manage to make your characters look the same on every panel?"

A.

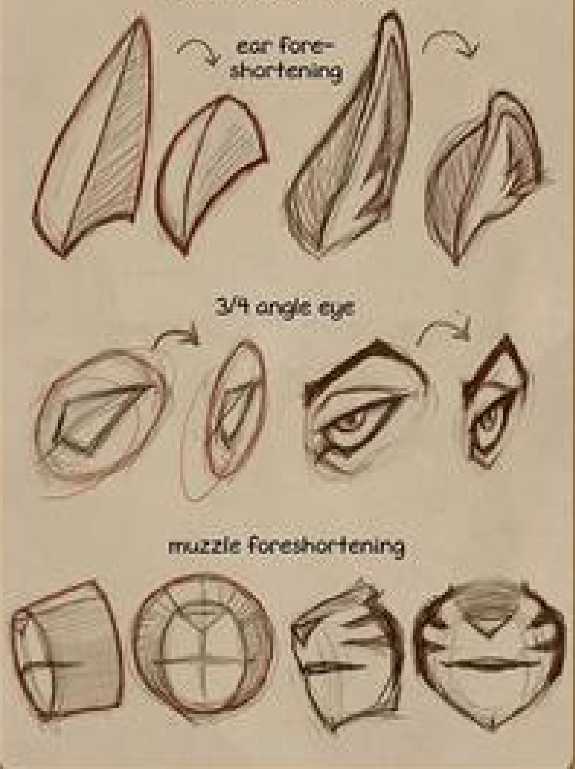

SO MUCH PAIN.

Do you find that a character you can draw in one perspective starts looking like a Picasso when you attempt to turn their head?

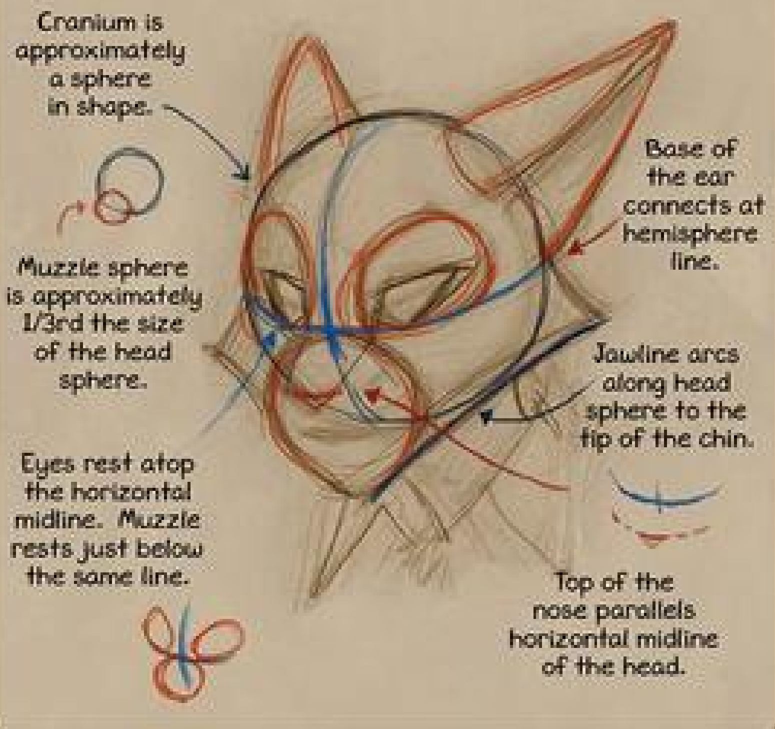
Well, it's no wonder. The character exists in 2D space, but likely represents a fairly complex 3D form. It's difficult for our brains to accurately parse how that looks rotated all around in imaginary space without some sort of help...or guide...or technique. Hmm.

Surprise! It's construction drawing. Again. 3-dimensionality becomes easier to interpret and manipulate when it's broken down into simple shapes like spheres and cones.

So, use simple shapes as you sketch to figure out how to rotate and foreshorten a character's anatomy when the visual angle changes.



It becomes more intuitive than formalized with practice, but if you think of the shapes comprising your character as landmarks that exist in relation to each other, you have a pattern you can learn to reproduce. For instance:



Cranium is approximately a sphere in shape.

Muzzle sphere is approximately 1/3rd the size of the head sphere.

Eyes rest atop the horizontal midline. Muzzle rests just below the same line.

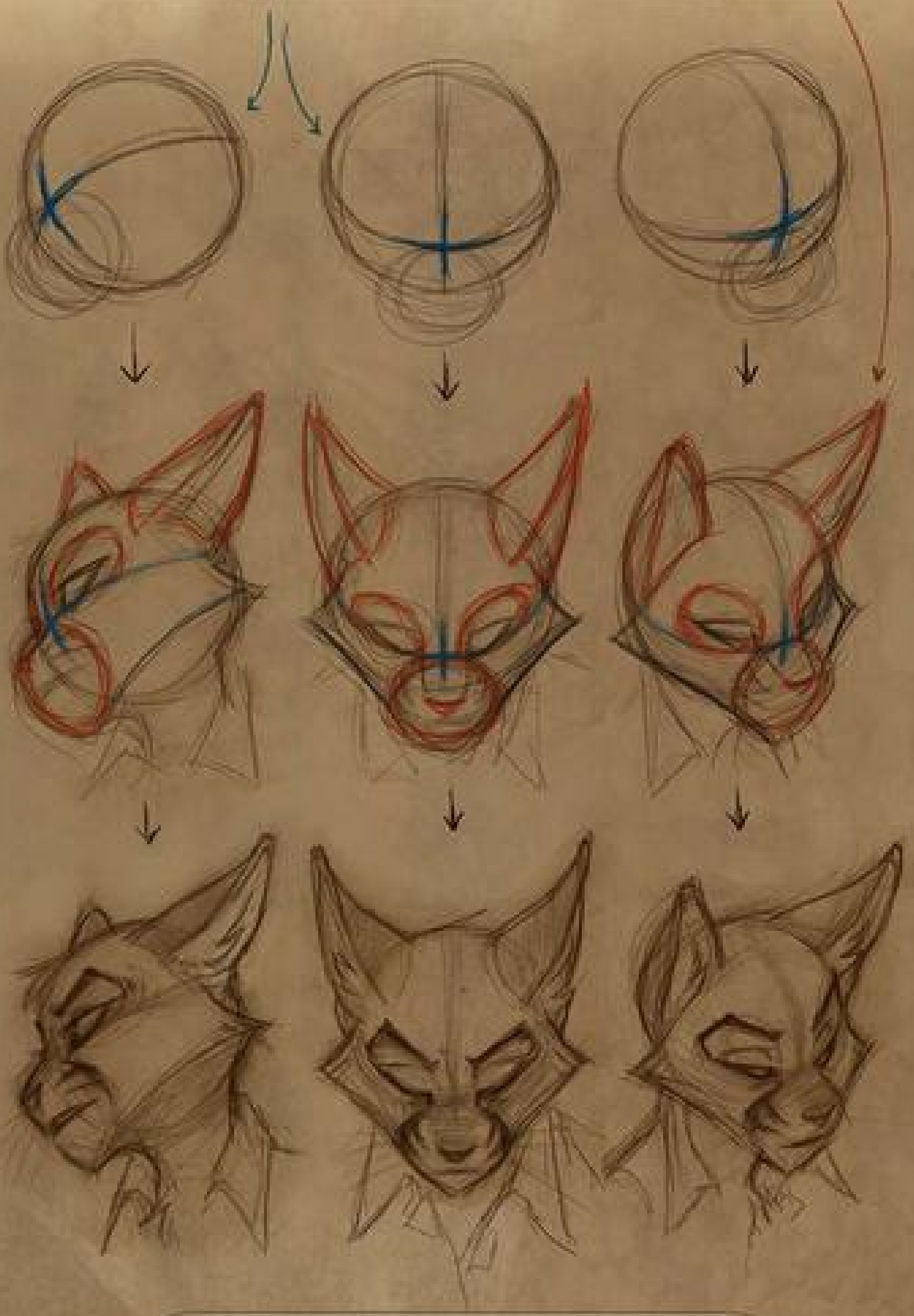
Base of the ear connects at hemisphere line.

Jawline arcs along head sphere to the tip of the chin.

Top of the nose parallels horizontal midline of the head.

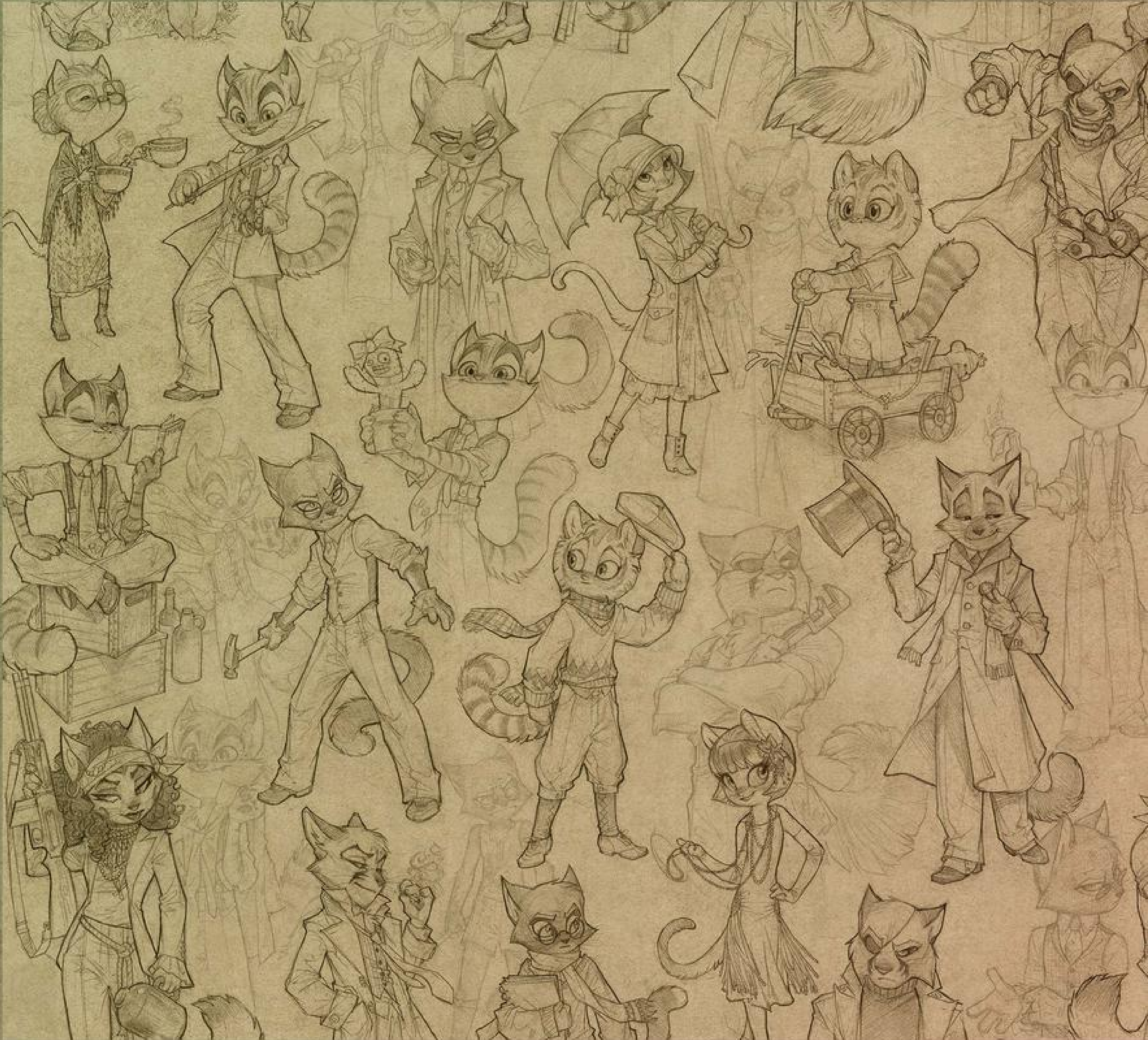
These few lines that approximate the head shape and mark out the midlines are all I need in order to know where all of the other shapes go.

No matter what position the head takes, all the same rules of shape inter-connection apply.



Lastly, bear in mind that while techniques like this may help facilitate progress, nothing suffices for practice. Don't give up if this doesn't work especially well the first time you try it... or the ninety-eighth time you try it.

Glance back at first attempts now and then to remind yourself that you've made progress.
Most importantly, just keep drawing.



HA HA HAA HA!

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Page 5 - Depiction of 4th Street with part of the Planters Hotel and the Old Courthouse visible. In present day, the Old Courthouse is part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the same park grounds upon which the Gateway Arch stands. The University of Missouri St. Louis Digital Library and Dick Lemen Collection of Old St. Louis Photographs were my sources of historic visual reference.

Page 8 - Venetian blinds were not a new invention at the time, but were newly popular as office window dressing in the early 20th century.

Page 10 - The Bevo Mill is an iconic St. Louis restaurant built in 1917 by August A. Busch (of Anheuser-Busch fame) and situated in a historically German part of the city. My visual references were primarily from the Thomas Kempland collection of J.R. Eike photos of old St. Louis (although the structure looked much the same then as it does today).

Page 11 - Bevo was an Anheuser-Busch brand of near-beer (or non-alcoholic beer) produced in St. Louis.

Page 14 - Bakelite was one of the first synthetic plastics. Despite its multitude of uses in industry and early electronics, it's perhaps best known as the "Materia Nova" of Jazz Age fashion, linking it inextricably with Art Deco. In the1920s, popularized by designers like Coco Chanel, myriad articles of jewelry, clothing, accessories and decor were made or adorned with bakelite.

Page 18 - The exterior of Wick's house is styled after the Desloge "Vouziers" Mansion, built in 1926 in Florissant, Missouri.

Page 20 - Forest Park in St. Louis is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. In 1904, it was host to the World's Fair (The Louisiana Purchase Exposition) and the Summer Olympics.

Page 20 - The "tire iron", as it originally appeared in the webcomic, looked like a post WWII style tool. To correct the anachronism, it's been altered here to more closely resemble a lug wrench from the sorts of tool kits that came standard with vehicles like the Model T Ford.

Page 22 - Depiction of the Grand Basin at the foot of Art Hill in Forest Park. Atop the hill is the St. Louis Art Museum (formerly known as the Palace of the Arts).

Page 22 - "Barrymore" refers to the famous family of screen and stage. Most notable in the era of silent film were actors Lionel, Ethel and John Barrymore. John in particular was known for his distinct profile.

Page 24 - The automated photo booth kiosk that was to become known as the Photomaton was the creation of Russian-born Anatole Josepho. These booths first debuted in New York City in 1925, and thereafter began appearing in cities nationwide.

Page 25 - I should probably be fined for gratuitous use of photo booth, but I'll attempt to excuse myself on the basis that photographs are a running theme in the story. Picture-taking was becoming a much less formal affair in the 1920s, which has added a certain extra degree of intrigue and delight to all my photo-based research. With the popularization of things like the photo booth and Brownie camera, private photography was no longer relegated to dour-faced portraiture and memento mori (one sort easily being confused for the other at a glance). Life seems suddenly more acutely present in picture-relics of that era. I should note that the dimensions of the photos in the artwork are not accurate, however. As a matter of artistic license, I fudged them.

Page 27 - Reference for the architecture here was St. Louis University's DuBourg Hall. College life for American girls in the 1920's was in some ways surprisingly progressive. Enrollment was much higher than in any previous decade, but courses of study were still largely restricted to nursing, teaching and "euthenics" (home economics). Like many modern-day pillow forts, much of the demesne of the arts and sciences still had a "no girls allowed" policy.

Page 30 - The radio programming is a rather thinly veiled allusion to the *Clicquot Club Eskimos*, who graced the very early NBC radio of the 1920's and 30's. I like Harry Reser's music personally, but it seemed like just the sort of thing Viktor'd be inclined to smash on the floor.

Page 30 - The radio itself is a bit of an anachronism. All-in-one cathedral style tabletop radios (tubes and speaker combined) were very popular starting in about 1930, but prior to that, tabletops generally consisted of a coffin-style box and a separate speaker. Also missing from the picture is the copper wire antenna that would probably need to run out the window and up to the roof for proper reception.

Page 32 - Mrs. Bapka is speaking Slovak (which is also Viktor's native tongue).

Page 34 - Defiance is a small, mostly rural Missouri town west of St. Louis.

Page 35 - There were laws prohibiting the stuffing of food products down one's drain before the advent of the garbage disposal unit. Apparently even Mrs. Bapka is a hardened criminal.
Drain pipe diameters for sinks were also smaller at the time than what's depicted here.

Page 38 - "Struggle buggy" is slang for a car, or more accurately, a tactless euphemism for potential goings-on in the backseat. There's a fun, circa 1929 King Oliver recording of a song by the same name.

Page 42 - "Phylloxera" was the aphid suspected of causing the Great French Wine Blight of the 1850s.

Page 45 - At the time, a checkbook would more typically consist of full sheets of 3 stacked, detachable checks.

Page 47 - Before about the 1940's, DUI laws were pretty loosely defined and loosely enforced in the US, and up until about the 70's and 80's, driving under the influence still wasn't taken as seriously as it is today. Even during the Prohibition years, it seems to have been regarded as more of a faux pas than a potential felony.

Page 50 - Check cashing seems to have really blossomed as a business in the early 20th century as employers were more regularly paying employees by check.

Page 51 - US paper currency was quite a bit larger in the past than it is today. In 1929, new, smaller notes (such as we're accustomed to today) were released with nationwide standardized designs.

Page 52 - Some artistic license has been taken with the pearl necklace. Because pearls are strung with knots between them to hold them in place, a necklace would generally not break apart so dramatically.

Page 53 - Mata Hari was a courtesan and dancer executed on charges of espionage during the Great War. She remains a sort of iconic femme fatale despite the probability that she was more scapegoat than spy.

Page 58-59 - Something as innocuous as a hip flask generally would not result in an arrest during Prohibition. Depending largely on the circumstances and the officer involved, it might simply be confiscated. Public drunkenness - or something resembling it - could certainly get you in some trouble, though.

Page 59 - A bench warrant is a type of arrest warrant, frequently issued for someone who has failed to appear at a mandated court date.

Page 61 - The Bureau of Prohibition was part of the Department of the Treasury. More specifically, it was initially part of the IRS, becoming its own bureau within the Treasury Department by 1927. During the span of Prohibition, it employed between about 1,500 and 2,500 agents (often called prohis or revenuers) to investigate illicit alcohol trade and enforce the 18th Amendment across the nation. (It was later moved to the Justice Department, then to the FBI. Today, it exists in a transmogrified capacity as the ATF.)

Page 63-64 - The alcohol is stashed in a springhouse - a small stone structure built over running water which serves as a sort of natural refrigerator. Overgrown with ivy and kudzu, springhouses often blend seamlessly into the rural landscape.

Page 72-73 - Religious revivals weren't on high in the United States in the 1920s. The tide of moralism that had helped enact Prohibition had waned while the country was enjoying certain prosperity. Popular preachers like Billy Sunday still embodied much of that spirit of fiery evangelism, though. (The dialogue here is a little more reminiscent of an 18th century Jonathan Edwards brand of fire and brimstone, in any case).

Page 74 - Alcohol was big business in the 1920s, of course, but so was death in many ways. Around the turn of the century, funerals and wakes were still traditionally held in the home, but by the 20's, death culture was changing, and funeral homes were becoming the more common location for services.
Also, it's not an organ pulper. It's embalming equipment.

Page 77 - The MKT (Missouri-Kansas-Texas) is more commonly known as the Katy Railroad. Defiance did have a depot, but it was miniscule, and few photos of it as it existed in 1920 seem to be available. The structure here is actually styled more after the St. Charles MKT depot. It too has been long defunct, but exists in a restored state in Frontier Park as one of the area's sentimental reminders of just how integral the railroads once were to American life and business.

Page 78 - Mk1 and Mk2 time fuse fragmentation grenades were a product of the Great War. It probably goes without saying the war spurred a myriad of weapon technology advancements. Many of those new weapons (most famously, the Thompson sub-machine gun) and surplus arms subsequently became entangled in the culture of crime stirred up by National Prohibition.

Page 79 - Viktor's weapon is a Winchester Model 1897, a pump-action shotgun, also known by the moniker 'trench gun' for its effectiveness in close-combat situations in WWI trenches.

Page 83 - The Palmer Raids were something of an extension of the Red Scare and a brand of xenophobia stoked by the Great War. In 1919 and 1920, under then Attorney General Alexander Palmer, thousands of individuals were arrested, detained and in some cases deported, often for mere association with leftist organizations.

Page 95 - The Old St. Charles Bridge once connected St. Louis and St. Charles counties across the wide Missouri River. Such bridge crossings in the area were sparse at the time. The bridge was demolished in 1998.

Page 101 - The St. Louis Riverfront. Historical visual references were from the Thomas Kempland Collection of J.R. Eike Glassplates.

Page 103 - "Interdental fricatives converted to stops" refers to the phonetic replacement of sounds like /th/ with hard consonant sounds like /d/ and /t/ in speech. Common to many English dialects and regional accents, *this* and *that* sound like *dis* and *dat*.

Page 104 - The Calinda is a dance with roots tracing back to African martial arts. It appears to have made its way to the American South with the slave trade where it intermingled with Creole and Cajun cultures and developed a new reputation as a bawdy, forbidden dance with implications of Voodoo practice. In sidelong reference to the Calinda dance, a girl named Colinda occasionally appears in Louisiana folk songs - the popular Cajun tune "*Allons Danser Colinda*" among them. The lyrics are pulled from the oldest (yet uncredited) version of the song I could find. (Speakers of continental French may note that Cajun French plays by some of its own rules.)

Page 105 - The powder-drawing on the floor is a veve (or vévé), a symbol used to summon or invoke a loa (one of Voovoo's pantheon of spirits). Each loa has his or her own individual veve.

Page 106 - Maitre Carrefour (Master Crossroads, also called Kalfu) is a loa of Haitian origin, considered to be an aspect of Legba, the intermediary between the human and spirit realms.

Page 108 - "Laveau and Lafitte" refers to New Orleans Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau and the pirate Jean Lafitte (to whom Serafine is claiming some dubious relation).

Page 112 - Mordecai is using the Hebrew spelling of a name to try to convey a safe combination to his mother in semi-encoded fashion, as the letters also have numeric value.

Page 120 - "Diable" (or "djab") in Voodoo refers to a spirit and carries a somewhat different connotation than 'devil' or 'demon' in more common contexts.

Page 123 - In Haitian Voodoo (and New Orleans Voodoo by extension), it's believed that a spirit may be invoked as a garde (or gad) for an individual through various ritualistic methods, sometimes involving branding or scarification. Of course, it's generally a much more voluntary rite than Serafine seems to have made it here.

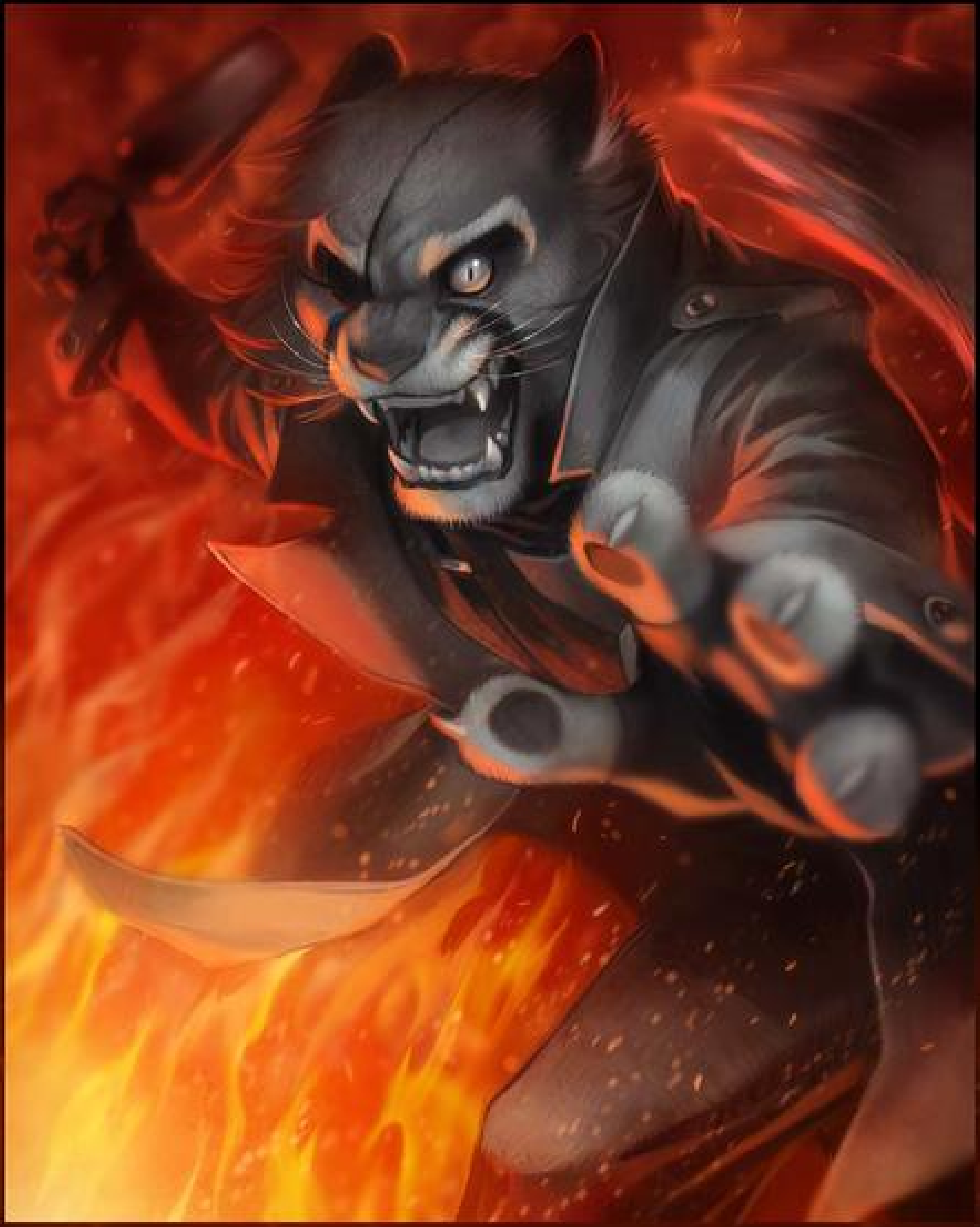
Page 129 - "Grippe" is an old-fashioned word for the flu.

Page 130 - The handcuffing might appear awkward here, but mundane police procedure of yore is difficult to pin down. I fell back almost entirely on photo reference for lack of more official material. At the time, a prisoner might be cuffed in front, cuffed behind the back, or even cuffed to an officer's wrist (something that'd be frowned upon today) for escort.

Page 135 - The "picture" referenced is The Unknown, a 1927 Chaney-Browning horror film.

Page 138 - The lyrics are from "Whiskey in the Jar", an old Irish traditional song (albeit one that remains popular to this day).

Page 139 - "Firing on six sixes" is Rocky's odd combination of two idioms meaning the same thing - "firing on six cylinders" and "firing on all sixes".



UNTIL NEXT TIME...